

Matthew 6:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.

Analysis

Jesus warns against practicing righteousness 'to be seen of men,' exposing the Pharisaical error of external religion performed for human acclaim. The phrase 'before men' indicates motive is crucial—the same act done for God's glory versus human praise has radically different spiritual value. This introduces the principle that God weighs hearts, not merely actions (1 Samuel 16:7). Hypocrisy seeks earthly reward and forfeits heavenly.

Historical Context

First-century Pharisees were known for public displays of piety—prominent prayer positions, conspicuous fasting, ostentatious giving. These practices garnered social status and reputation for holiness but masked hearts far from God. Jesus consistently denounced this external religiosity devoid of heart transformation.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How can you examine your motives to ensure religious practices flow from love for God rather than desire for human approval?
2. What is the difference between legitimate public worship and hypocritical performance designed to gain human praise?

Interlinear Text

Προσέχετε	τοῖς	ἐλεημοσύνην	ὑμῶν	μήγε,	ποιεῖν				
Take heed	which	alms	your	not	that ye do				
G4337	G3588	G1654	G5216	G3361	G4160				
ἔμπροσθεν	τοῖς	ἀνθρώπων	πρὸς	τοῖς	θεαθῆναι	αὐτοῖς·			
before	which	men	to be seen	which		of them			
G1715	G3588	G444	G4314	G3588	G2300	G846			
εἰ	δὲ	μήγε,	μισθὸν	οὐκ	ἔχετε	παρὰ	τοῖς	πατρὶ	ὑμῶν
G1487	G1161	not	reward	no	ye have	of	which	Father	your
		G3361	G3408	G3756	G2192	G3844	G3588	G3962	G5216
τοῖς	ἐν	τοῖς	οὐρανοῖς						
which	is in	which	heaven						
G3588	G1722	G3588	G3772						

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 23:5 (Parallel theme): But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments,

John 12:43 (Parallel theme): For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

Hebrews 6:10 (Parallel theme): For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

Luke 16:15 (Parallel theme): And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.

Galatians 6:12 (Parallel theme): As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.

Ezekiel 33:31 (Parallel theme): And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.

2 John 1:8 (Parallel theme): Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.

John 5:44 (Parallel theme): How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?

Mark 8:15 (Parallel theme): And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod.

Matthew 6:16 (Parallel theme): Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.