

Matthew 6:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:

Analysis

The hyperbolic expression 'let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth' emphasizes the secrecy and unselfconscious nature true charity should have. The point is not absolute secrecy (some giving must be public for accountability) but absence of self-promoting motivation. Genuine generosity flows from love for God and neighbor without calculating return or recognition. This precludes even internal self-congratulation.

Historical Context

In Jewish tradition, the right hand was associated with strength and action, the left with lesser function. Jesus' metaphor means giving should be so natural and unself-conscious that even you don't dwell on it or congratulate yourself. This stands against the Pharisaic practice of carefully cataloging good deeds.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How can you cultivate a heart that gives generously without dwelling on your own generosity or expecting recognition?
2. What does this teaching reveal about the subtle danger of spiritual pride even in legitimate good works?

Interlinear Text

σου δὲ ποιεῖ ἐλεημοσύνην μὴ γνῶτω ἡ ἀριστερά
thy **But** **doest** **alms** **not** **know** ^{G3588} **left hand**
G4675 G1161 G4160 G1654 G3361 G1097 G710

σου τί ποιεῖ ἡ δεξιὰ σου
thy **what** **doest** ^{G3588} **right hand** **thy**
G4675 G5101 G4160 G1188 G4675

Additional Cross-References

John 7:4 (Parallel theme): For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world.

Matthew 9:30 (Parallel theme): And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it.