

Commentary on the Gospel for Wed, Jun 15th 2016

Christianity is a community, not a competition. It's not even an exhibition. Jesus says we should take care of our own spirituality and not worry about what others are doing, and not worry about how we appear to others. We can pray in private, and God can hear us just fine. We don't have to pray in the streets and make a show and make sure everyone sees us pray and sees how holy we are. Sure, people do that, and God hears them too, but that's not the point. The point is our relationship with God. Our prayer should be a conversation with God, a private conversation with God, not to show off for others.

The good works we do should be for the good, not to show off. Are we providing alms to help others because it's the right thing to do, or so others can see how good and generous we are? The point is to be helpful and do the right thing, not to show off our generosity. Showing off our generosity might actually have the opposite effect. If we do good just to show off, we will have no recompense. We should do good because it's the right thing to do, not for the attention, not for the reward, but those who are sincere in their good works will be rewarded.

Hypocrites make a big show of their spirituality, praying in the streets, drawing attention to their alms-giving. Their point is the attention, not the good works. They're only concerned that everyone sees how holy they are. They're only after the reward, which will slip through their fingers.

The point of prayer is connection with God, not attention from others. The point of alms-giving is to help others and to do the right thing: to be a good neighbor. It's not for praise or attention. The hypocrite whose heart is not in it will not get the full reward. He may think the praise and attention are reward enough, but the one with a sincere spirit may not have the immediate attention but will have the true reward.

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