

# REAL SPIRITUALITY

BECOMING REAL [MATTHEW, PART 3] · MATTHEW 6:1-18 · MARCH 14, 2021 · PASTOR MATT ERICKSON

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## SERMON OUTLINE:

*"Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven." (Matthew 6:1)*

### Jesus and fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets

- Who Are We Living For?: The Audience of Our Righteousness (6:1)
- Practicing, or doing, righteousness
- The assumption: "When you give to the needy...and when you pray...when you fast" (6:2, 5, 16)
- The hypocrites and their audience: "in front of others to be seen by them"
- The real righteous and their audience: the Father
- A word about "reward"

### Giving to the Needy (6:2-4)

- The way of deficient righteousness: announcing it for personal honor
- The way of surpassing righteousness: secrecy in giving that gives for the Father

### Prayer (6:5-15)

- The way of deficient righteousness: public prayer to be seen by other or babbling prayer in hopes of being heard
- The way of surpassing righteousness: secrecy in prayer and few words in prayer that rests in the Father
- A pattern for prayer
- Forgiveness and prayer

### Fasting (6:16-18)

- The way of deficient righteousness: looking somber so others see it
- The way of surpassing righteousness: secrecy in fasting that hungers for the Father

### Practicing Real Spirituality as Disciples of Jesus

- Disciples put real righteousness into practice with real spirituality
- Disciples practice real spirituality with secrecy and hiddenness
- Disciples practice real spirituality for an audience of One

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Answer one of these questions:
  - When did you know a secret that was hard not to tell?
  - Have you ever found out that someone wasn't really who they appeared to be? What

happened?

2. This week we continue our series, "Becoming Real," on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount by looking at Matthew 6:1-18. Begin your study in prayer by asking God to speak to you through His Word and then, whether you are alone or with a group, read that passage aloud.
3. Read Matthew 5:17-20. In light of those words, what do you think Jesus is getting at in 6:1?
4. In the rest of this section, Jesus offers three contrasts in spiritual behavior between the old, deficient righteousness of the Pharisees and teachers of the law and the new, surpassing righteousness of His people. The first contrast (6:2-4) addresses giving to the needy. Summarize the contrast here in your own words.
5. Based on what you're reading here, do you think it's wrong to live for the "reward" of the Father? What do you think it means to live for the Father's reward?
6. The second contrast (6:5-15) focuses on prayer. In verses 5-8 Jesus offers two deficient ways of praying, one characterizing the hypocrites and one characterizing the pagans. What are these two ways of praying and how should Jesus' people approach prayer?
7. Verses 9-13 are often called "The Lord's Prayer" but really describe the disciples' way of prayer. What stands out to you about this model of prayer offered by Jesus, particularly in light of His instruction in verses 5-8?
8. Jesus speaks some pointed words about forgiveness in verses 14-15 that link up with the words about prayer in verse 12. What stands out to you about this connection between prayer and forgiveness?
9. The final contrast of this passage (6:16-18) focuses on fasting. Summarize in your own words this final contrast.
10. Reflect on these three spiritual practices – giving to the needy, prayer, and fasting. Which of these practices are a regular part of your life with God? Which are foreign to or difficult for you? What do you think it would practically look like for you to grow in living with God through one or more of these three spiritual practices?
11. What is one thing God is speaking to you through this study of giving to the needy, prayer, and fasting? If you're on your own, write that down and pray over that this week. If you are with a small group, share your answers with one another before closing in prayer.

## DIG DEEPER:

This week dig deeper into this section of Jesus' teaching on real spirituality in one or more of the following ways:

- Consider memorizing Matthew 6:1 this week
- Put Jesus' guidance on secrecy, almsgiving, prayer, and fasting into practice this week. Journal or talk with a trusted friend about what you're learning through these spiritual practices.
- Consider digging deeper into spiritual disciplines or practices through one of the following books: Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*; Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*; Donald Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*.