

HEAVEN ONLY KNOWS
The Power Zone VIII
Matt. 6:1-6; 16-21

INTRODUCTION

- A. “Why am I doing this?”
 - 1. “No one knows I’m doing anything.”
 - 2. “Would anybody even miss me?”
- B. Awards Ceremonies.
 - 1. Summer camp at Tidal River, CT.
 - 2. Students “nothing” without award.
 - 3. Athletes need applause...perform.
- C. Recognition. Exists with everyone.
 - 1. Is that what Christianity is all about?
 - 2. Do we live for applause of others?

I. THE MESSAGE – Matthew 6.

A. *Be especially careful when you are trying to be good so that you don’t make a performance out of it. It might be good theater, but the God who made you won’t be applauding. When you do something for someone else, don’t call attention to yourself. You’ve seen them in action, I’m sure – “playactors” I call them – treating prayer meeting and street corner alike as a stage, acting compassionate as long as someone is watching, playing to the crowds. They get applause, true, but that’s all they get. When you help someone out, don’t think about how it looks. Just do it – quietly and unobtrusively. That is the way your God, who conceived you in love, working behind the scenes, helps you out. And when you come before God, don’t turn that into a theatrical production either. All these people making a regular show out of their prayers, hoping for stardom! Do you think God sits in a box seat?*

Here’s what I want you to do: Find a quiet, secluded place so you won’t be tempted to roleplay before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage. The focus will shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense His grace (vss. 1-6).

When you practice some appetite-denying discipline to better concentrate on God, don’t make a production out of it. It might turn you into a small-time celebrity but it won’t make you a saint. If you “go into training” inwardly, act normal outwardly. Shampoo and comb your hair, brush your teeth, wash your face. God doesn’t require attention-getting devices. He won’t overlook what you are doing; He’ll reward you well (vss. 16-18).

Don’t hoard treasure down here where it gets eaten by moths and corroded by rust or – worse! – stolen by burglars. Stockpile treasure in heaven, where it’s safe from moth and rust and burglars. It’s obvious, isn’t it? The place where your treasure is, is the place you will most want to be, and end up being (vss. 19-21, The Message).

- B. Avoiding Outward Show.
 - 1. Giving, vss. 2-4.
 - a. Collection boxes in the temple.
 - b. The shape of the box created a loud noise.
 - c. The widow’s two coins, Lk. 21:1-4.

2. Praying, vss. 5-6.
 - a. Praying played an important part in the life of the Jews.
 - b. They would pray three times a day at set times.
 - c. If in the street, proper to stop, turn toward the temple with outstretched hands and pray.
 - d. This built their reputation as “spiritually minded” individuals.
 - e. Jesus labeled them as “hypocrites” or “playactors.”
3. Fasting, vss. 16-18; Lev. 16:29-31.
 - a. Only one commanded day for fasting – Day of Atonement.
 - i. Association of fasting with humbling, Ps. 35:13.
 - b. Time of Christ, Pharisees fasting two days a week (Monday, Thursday) because these were market days.
 - c. Provided opportunity to impress the public with their piety.
 - d. They would walk around with unkempt hair, wrinkled clothes and face powder to appear pale.
 - e. Jesus labeled them as “hypocrites.”

II. WHAT PEOPLE THINK – WHAT GOD KNOWS.

- A. Concern for What God Thinks.
 1. An example from the apostle Paul, 1 Cor. 9:19-23.
 2. Character was at stake.
 - a. Timothy (Acts 16:3) – matter of convenience.
 - i. Jewish not circumcised considered apostate; not allowed in synagogue.
 - b. Titus (Gal. 2:3-5) – circumcision necessary.
 - i. Gentile, circumcision would “prove” Jews teaching right.
- B. Before God with a Clear Conscience.
 1. Acts 23:1 – I stand before God...
 2. Rom. 14:7-8 – live or die to God...
 3. Ps. 139:1-6, 23-24 – He sees all and knows...

III. HEAVENLY APPLAUSE.

- A. Mt. 6:19-20.
 1. “Treasure,” same in 1 Cor. 16:2.
 2. How do we “lay by in store?”
 - a. Pr. 4:23, “*Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life.*”
 - b. Kind deeds, spiritual discipline.
 - c. Notes of kindness, encouragement.
- B. Our Chief Treasure, Spiritual Applause.
 1. Should be focus of our daily life.
 2. Life measured by what we give away.
 3. Only one worthy of applause, God.