

XXVI. Matthew in Biblical Perspective
A Royal Manifesto of the Kingdom from the King
“The Sixth Commandment: Do Not Be a Hypocrite, Part 1”
Matthew 6:1-4
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August 15, 2010 – Morning Sermon

We are in the study on the Sermon on the Mount, the first of six sermons of our Savior in the Scriptures. Matthew 6:1-4 says **1** *“Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. 2* *“Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 3* *But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4* *so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.* The grass withers and the flower fades. God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may it be preached for you.

In 1986 I made my first of eight trips and God willing more yet to come, to Uganda. In that year the entire two weeks was under machine gun fire and there was no electricity and no water. The rebels Obote and Idi Amin were still in parts of the country, even in the capital city of Kampala. We could actually hear machine gun fire during our worship services but I want to tell you a story of something that happened in one of the worship services. We were in a cathedral and I was so encouraged as I watched hundreds of people coming up. I had the privilege to preach there. I watched hundreds of Ugandans in their bright African clothing and their bright faces having walked and walked to be there. We had five full services. Something happened during the time of the offering during one of the services that astounded me because I had never seen it before. First of all, you gave the offering by coming forward and the deacons would stand there with the plates while you brought it forward. Then I noticed something else that while you went forward all would bow or curtsy and they were carrying their financial pieces whether it was money, silver, coins, paper or checks in their right hand crumpled up. Their left hand was over the top of the right-hand and they would place it in the offering, pause for a moment and then leave back to their seat while we were all singing at this time.

Don't get concerned because I'm not thinking of instituting that although it did kind of like the idea of the deacons standing in the front and you coming forward and the elders having a membership check list of who's coming and who's not coming but perhaps we ought not to do that. I asked them why they did this and they said “It's been our practice to bring our offerings forward to be an actual act of worship. The Bible says do not let your right hand know what your left hand is doing. So we hold the offering tight and then we cover it with their left hand so that nobody can see it but yet you don't let your left hand touch your right hand because it's not supposed to.” I don't think this text that they drew from requires us to do it just that way but this text does have something very powerful to say for us who belong to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and who can now say to God “You're my Father.”

We are going into a section of the Sermon on the Mount that if I was writing a television program I would call it ‘life in the family.’ We are going to be talking about

life in the family. The first part of the Sermon on the Mount told you who was in the family. It is Gospel blessed people who have been saved by grace and Gospel Reformation is taking place in their life and we call it the Beatitudes. Then He gave you the Gospel ministry of the family which is salt and light. Then He gave us the way the law is used in the Gospel. He said "You can't even be in the kingdom of heaven unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the Pharisees." How do I get exceedingly to this beyond the Pharisees?

First of all, when I come to Christ I receive the righteousness of Christ. I am not ashamed of the gospel, it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also the Gentile, for in it the righteousness of God is given to us (Romans 1:16). He made him who knew no sin to be sin so that we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21). So I have a perfect righteousness that exceeds that of the Pharisees that has been given to me but now I am called to pursue righteousness. So Jesus takes the time to give us ten commandments. There were Ten Commandments that were given on Mount Sinai and now there are ten commandments from the Sermon on the Mount that takes the Law of God and shows how the Gospel broadens it, heightens it, lengthens it and deepens it. This is not exhaustive.

So He takes five of them and He says "When the Gospel as a hold of your heart, you love Christ in you want to keep His commandments in order to honor Him who has given you this perfect righteousness, then you don't just not murder people, you commit life, even with your fun you commit life. As far as marriage goes, you don't simply refrain from adultery, you commit marriage, a one flesh relationship and in fact you don't simply say no to sexual immorality but you say no to the joy of sexuality within the marriage bed. And listen when My people speak they say what they mean and mean what they say and they are never mean when they say it. Their yes is yes and their no is no. The world is a sinful place so we have to have oaths and covenants and contracts and everything but for My people all of that is unnecessary because their truth is given in love and they speak the truth truthfully. You can trust what they say. By the way, when people sin against My people they don't set up a personal vigilante system of justice to give retribution to people. There's a place for court systems to deal with that in the court systems will do that but when people come against My people they will go the second mile and turn the cheek. When My people are persecuted they don't get even, they love their enemies and pray for those who persecute them."

So Jesus gave us five commandments that declare what exceeding righteousness looks like. It's not exhaustive, but it's five commandments what exceeding righteousness looks like and the difference it makes in the lives of those who He has saved. Not only do they have the blessings of Sonship but they walked as sons to honor their Father. He now makes a turn in Matthew chapter 6. So we are making a turn and now these five commandments are not so much declarations of exceeding righteousness that these five commandments deal with how you practice exceeding righteousness. Gospel righteousness to honor Christ our Savior, how do we do that in a way that Christ is actually honored? How do you practice that exceeding righteousness? He will give us five commandments on this. We're going to talk about mercy, prayer, fasting, not judging, and the sin of anxiety. We are going to talk about how God's people live but you're learning how to live in the Family. In just these coming versus it will say 10 times,

“the Father.” You give to the Father. You pray to the Father. You fast before the Father. You are not anxious because you have a Father that cares for you.

So He talks to us about life in the Family. If you are in the Kingdom that means you're in the Family. If you know Jesus Christ, His Son as your Savior that means you are sons and daughters of the living God. You are in the Family. Now how do we live in the Family? How does the Family live in the light of their Father? The first one He will take on deals with this matter of mercy. How do we practice Gospel righteousness in a way to honor the Lord in the area of the Ministry of mercy? That will be the first place He will take us but before we get there let's look back at Matthew 6:1.

I want to look at Matthew 6:1 just for a moment. This verse kind of sets up the next five commandments of how to practice exceeding righteousness. We have already gotten Gospel righteousness, the height, the breadth, the length and the depth of it and now He is going to tell us how you live it out. It's not so much what you do now but it's how you do it and these five commandments are going to be directives on how you do it. He will start off in Matthew 6:1 by saying “*Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.*” This verse sets up all five of the commandments on mercy, giving, fasting and anxiety. This verse introduces this second group of five commandments.

He starts off with “Beware.” Have you seen the proverbial sign in front of the house that says ‘beware’? Don't worry about the dog there's a gun that lives here. Beware, don't get too close here. What is it that you want me to be wary of war to be careful about? He says, “My children in my family that are practicing this exceeding righteousness to honor Me who gave you a perfect righteousness, I want you to beware of practicing this righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them.” Don't stop that sentence by saying; beware of practicing your righteousness before other people. There are a lot of things that you do that if you are going to do with righteousness that requires people to observe it. It has to be done in public. I would that men would lift up holy hands everywhere to pray, sharing the Gospel and there were all kinds of things that can be done publicly but this is not a call to privatize your Christianity behind the four walls of your house. You have to finish the sentence. *Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them...* beware of doing this not for your Father but for others to see, applaud and acclaim. That's what He wants you to stay away from.

When you do righteousness, it many times requires public display but don't do it for the public to acclaim what you are doing. Jesus says, “I want you to do it for Me.” As for those who would do it for the public to see it here is what He says, “those who practice righteousness before others *will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.*” Let's not go by this too quickly. Who are we talking about here? We are not talking about unbelievers who are hypocrites. We are talking about believers who get trapped into hypocrisy. We are talking about people whose God is their Father. They are converted. They are saved. They know Him yet they are not nominal Christians who are hypocrites, these are believers but in this area of living out their life in public they have started to do it for the sake of public applause and acclaim and have fallen into the trap of hypocrisy. What that believer just did it to be applauded by others has just gotten his reward. He will get no reward from the Father because he just got his reward paid in full

by the applause of men. Perhaps he got his name in the church newsletter or the church bulletin board or his name in a book and if he did it for that then he has already gotten his reward and will not get a reward from the Father for that.

Here's the challenge. Many of us will look at that and say "I don't ever want to do that so I'm going to be God's secret agent. I will just serve the Lord in secret." Here's the problem with that. Remember the salt and light? Matthew 5:16 says "*In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*" I can't have a private Christianity. I have to have a personal relationship with Jesus but I can't have a private Christianity. My Christianity has to go public. I have to be a witness. My light is to shine before others. It doesn't say "*let your light shine before others, so that they may see what a great Christian you are and write books about you.*" It doesn't say that. When they see your good works they don't glorify you because you have learned how to do it in such a way that they don't see you but they see the Father in you and they are drawn to His Son. "*They see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*" That's what they see and that's what's going on.

You love Jesus because He first loved you. So now because of that Gospel motivation you want to keep His commandments. If you love Me you'll keep My commandments and now you've learned it goes so far beyond 'don't just do this or that' but there's the sanctity of life, truth worship and the Word. There is all of this stuff where it goes up here and out here and down here where I'm learning how far this exceeding righteousness goes. As I go out to live it God requires me to live it before the world so the world will see what I do but they don't see me they see the Father in me. I'm supposed to be seen but unseen. I'm supposed to be obvious but not observed. They should end up seeing Jesus so He says, "I'm going to teach you how to live in such a way that this exceeding righteousness is displayed but they don't see you, they see the Father through you and are drawn to the Son of God who changed you." That's what we want to get to. That is the challenge that is before us.

Now He gives us a couple of examples. He starts on the ministry of mercy. What were the people who don't get rewards doing? The unrewarded practices of righteousness in the area of the ministry of mercy is found in Matthew 6:2 which says "*Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.*" Is mercy ministry a righteous thing to do? Absolutely and they are doing mercy ministry. Now what do they do in their practice? They always go to public places to be seen by others and get the publicity. They are going to the synagogue because everybody is there. They are going to the streets because everybody is there. As they are going there, the problem is not that they are ministering to a guy that's on the street or a guy sitting at the synagogue but the reason they went to the public place was not to get to the needy person but so that everybody would see them. By the way, just in case you don't see me I'm going to get a trumpet to blow when I walk up with my gift. In other words, they call a parade.

Of course we don't do that. We just put it on our website. We call a press conference and say "Look what we're doing." That's what they do. In other words, they have fallen into hypocrisy. I want to share something with you that has been so helpful this last week. It showed up in my devotions. This last week I was going back over the

Law of God and translating it back to the Law of liberty and the Gospel and where that takes me and it struck me how when God warns us in His Law He never warns us about the traps of atheism. Have you ever noticed that? In the Law of God what does the first commandment say? It doesn't say "Don't be an atheist, get a god." It says "You shall have no other gods before you." The second commandment says "You shall not make for yourself graven images", no idolatry.

Why is He saying that? It is because the tendency of sinful men and women is not atheism. Very few people embrace the foolishness and futility of atheism. Our bigger problem is usually idolatry. We will worship and by the way even if you give me thirty minutes with an atheist I'll tell you who his god is. He has some god. We were made to worship and we will worship. Our problem is not so much the futility of atheism but it is the stupidity of idolatry. We take a tree and cut it in half. Isaiah says one half warms you and the other half you carve it and worship it. That makes a lot of sense. Half of it you go build a house with and the other half you go worship, that makes a lot of sense. Our biggest issue is with idolatry whether its food, drink, sex, power or money or whatever it is that's our bigger trap. If idolatry is the number one snare for believers then I want you to know that I agree with John Calvin.

I wished I could tell you I came up with this on my own but Calvin said this and Jesus said it before Calvin. The second biggest snare is hypocrisy which is doing the right thing for the wrong reasons. A hypocrite is a Greek term *hypokrites* we translate hypocrite in our Bible and it's a Greek term for the theater. When I was a kid my dad and mom got into this fad called 'color by number' and the first one they did they actually put a frame around it. It was the two Greek masks, one frowning and one smiling. Those masks come from the notion of hypocrite. Hypocrite was an actor who played a part. It was a pretty cheap cast because there was one guy who played all the characters by putting a mask on for each character when it was their turn to talk. Jesus said, "Don't be a hypocrite. Don't live your life as a mask. Don't play the part of an actor for an audience of the world." We may not be hypocrites in the sense of we're believers but we can fall into the snare of hypocrisy and do an act of righteousness that's unrewarded in heaven but it is rewarded. In fact, it's paid in full. You want people to notice you and that's why you did it, okay, they noticed you and you got your reward.

Instead of playing the part of a hypocrite or falling into hypocrisy in the ministry of mercy, how should we do it? Notice what Jesus says. The practice of doing mercy ministry in hypocrisy you go public in order to be public get the acclaim, you sound the trumpet, blow the horn and create the parade and then the whole motive is for people to be seen by men. So when that happens, you have your reward in full but you don't get rewarded from the Father.

So what about us? How should we do our ministry of mercy? Matthew 6:3-4 says *3 But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.* We are not a hypocrite, who are actors playing a part but we're sons who give from the heart on behalf of the Father. This isn't what makes us believers or Christians. This manifests our Father and our relationship with Him. So what is our practice? It is no fanfare. It is from the heart and our motive is that the Father sees and is pleased and the need is met.

Here are three takeaways. If we're going to practice Gospel righteousness out of love to Christ and others in this ministry of mercy here is the first thing we need to know. The first takeaway is mercy ministry is not a consideration but an expectation. It is not something for us to consider doing but it is something that God expects us to do. Please notice, does Jesus ever command you in this text to do the ministry of mercy? Does He say "Now go do the ministry of mercy"? He never does. He expects it. Jesus does not anticipate the need to tell us to do the ministry of mercy but He says "If you're doing exceeding righteousness then God has been merciful to you then you will be merciful to others. What I need to do is to warn you of practicing it for other people to applaud you." But He expects us to be doing mercy ministry. In a sense isn't that even more powerful than if He had commanded us to do it?

In Matthew 6:2-3 it didn't say "If..." but it said "When you give to the needy..." It said that twice. It doesn't say "if you give to the needy..." This isn't up for consideration. In other words, starting right here mercy ministry for every Christian and every Christian family and for every church is not up for an option for consideration but it is an expectation from our God that every one of us embrace the ministry of mercy including our families. Every church that names Christ as Lord and Savior embraces the ministry of mercy. It's not a consideration but an expectation. So please take advantage of it personally. Teach your children. Be a family that does mercy.

When you go down to serve a thanksgiving meal with the Daniel Cason ministry make it a family affair. When you are walking in one of the lobbies here at Briarwood and you pass the pocket change box that goes to a mercy ministry say to your child, "Come here and let me teach you about alms giving." After the Lord's Supper when Bruce says "The diaconal boxes are there for your benevolence and mercy giving" take your child and show them how to give alms for mercy. Call up our mercy pastor Chris Thompson and say, "Chris, what's going on in our mercy ministry where I can help and my family can get engaged in?" Or get involved with the mercy ministry through the Congregational communities where one is in the Fairfield area not just sending resources but they are hands on and engaged in mercy ministry. This isn't a consideration, it's an expectation.

We have received mercy. We give mercy. Maybe you want to get involved with the Crown Ministry or Better Basics or the Discovery Club or coming to our ethnic pastors who have unbelievable challenges in the international ministry or the New Focus Ministry of handling dozens of calls every week that are handled Biblically, redemptively, graciously and thoughtfully. This is for every believer, every Christian. It's not "if" but an expectation. Maybe you want to help out with that prison ministry and the open doors that are there. Maybe you want to help out by providing canned goods. There is almost an endless array that is going on here. The question is, is it just going on or is it apart of your life?

That brings me to a second takeaway which is mercy ministry is never announced by always pronounced. It is not something we announce by saying, "Hey we're doing mercy ministry..." or "My family does this in mercy ministry". Now you may be asked to give a testimony and that's fine but we don't promote ourselves in our mercy ministry as a Christian or as a family or as a church. I had an interesting fellow come up to me not long ago. It was a wonderful moment for me because he had been thinking through this area of mercy ministry and he said to me, "Pastor, this mercy ministry is great! This is

something that is wide open.” And we began to talk about mercy ministry. As we talked about mercy ministry his eyes lit up and he said, “Pastor I believe that Briarwood needs to do a better job at mercy ministry.” I said, “Amen!” Then he said, “How come we’re not doing anything in mercy ministry?” I said, “Would you mind if I have a lengthy conversation with you where you don’t think I’m being defensive but only informative?” Then I took him to what our mercy pastor was doing and to New Focus and to Crown Ministries and to International Ministries and this marvelous Special Connections Ministry to the disabled and the needy.

I took him to show him what was happening in the prison ministry and what are deacons are doing and what’s happening in the household ministry in the congregational communities and what they are doing hands on. We walked by all of these things and what happens in all of these ministries and these partnerships we get in these urban ministry situations that have opened up so marvelously from people who have so much wisdom that we can embrace and engage with them. I better not start naming them all. Then he said to me, “How come nobody knows about this?” Then I took him to this passage in Matthew 6. There are a lot of reasons people don’t know about it.

One of the reasons why we do things unannounced with no fanfare is for the sake of the people we are ministering to. They don’t become props for everybody to know how great our mercy ministry is. Another reason is if I start talking about mercy ministry and publicizing it you will only hear about the ones that I like and the problem with that is when some of you hear mercy as an expectation you’ll say “I knew it, I knew it, I knew it” and you’ll come up with something. The list of mercy ministries I have just told you about have come from people in our congregation that received a burden in an area and said “Why don’t we try this?” So instead of the mercy ministry of your pastor we get these unbelievable flavors that are coming out all over the place because some of you have so many unique gifts. So instead of me just plugging you into what I think you ought to help out in, let’s just hear God’s call and God’s heart on you. Yes, there will be fill in the blanks on all the things I just mentioned but over all what begins to happen is you personally and your family begin to embrace certain things in certain ways and you begin to own it. Some of you have actually been gifted by God to create ways to do mercy ministry that we haven’t even seen yet but will be so unbelievably effective.

So we’re not going to put up a website or publish a pamphlet about Briarwood’s mercy ministry or talk about how great the mercy ministry is here at Briarwood. There is a lot I’d love to tell you but we’re not going to do that. I do hope and pray that we do it for our Father so that nobody sees you or me or your family or my family or this church but they see the Father and His mercy through us. Then others will be drawn to Christ whom the Father sent in mercy for all of us and who has made the difference in us.

The final and third takeaway is mercy ministries basically are downstream from Gospel discipleship. We say we are going to equip Christians to worship God and reach others. How are you going to reach others? You will reach others through Gospel words and Gospel deeds which includes mercy ministry but here’s the key. The most effective mercy ministry is not upstream from Gospel discipleship but it’s downstream. Do you remember what happened in the Acts 6 where they had a problem with proper mercy ministry to the widows? Do you remember what the elders said? They said, “We will not neglect prayer and the Word to wait on the tables. It is not good for us to neglect prayer and the Word to wait on the tables.” They were not saying it is not good to do

mercy ministry but they were saying mercy ministry must flow from prayer and the Word. If it doesn't flow from that there won't be anything to give, there won't be any heart to give and there won't be anyone to give to but if prayer and the Word are doing its work in our life then inevitably it will show up.

So what is this third takeaway? It is mercy ministry is not the Gospel but an inevitable effect and consequence of the Gospel. Where did the orphanages and the hospitals come from? They came from the Great Awakening. When the Great Awakening swept Europe and bounced over here all of a sudden Christians started hospitals and orphanages. They started passing laws so that 3 and 5 year old kids couldn't work in a mine. They began to be concerned about mercy. They began to reach out and care for others. So what we do in mercy ministry is not the Gospel. That's what we call a social Gospel in which we gave the cup of cold water and that was the Gospel. No, you give the cup of cold water in Jesus Name. What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul (Mark 8:36)? So we bring Gospel deeds and we bring Gospel words. So when the Gospel takes hold of someone's life inevitably mercy ministry is going to flow from it. When mercy ministry flows from it, it's the consequence of the Gospel and then it becomes part of the dragnet that draws people to the Gospel.

So we say 'no' to hypocrisy. We don't want to go the route of Cain. We don't want to go the route of Ananias and Sapphira. We don't want to go the route of Judas who betrayed the Lord with a kiss. We don't want to be hypocrites. We don't want to play a part. We want to act from the heart. We want the Father to see us and we want people to see the Father as we reach out in mercy and grace to those that are around us. Again, this thing about a reward is you don't get a reward as a believer if you do it for self promotion. You already have your reward, paid in full, you got promoted, you made the sign out in front of the church or you made this or that and everybody is talking about you and your church. So there is your reward.

If we are to do it and it's to be seen but unseen, what will be our reward? That's simple. It's every time you see a need getting met your heart gets filled up. Every time somebody sees the Father in you there's your reward. Every time someone comes to the Father through His Son there is our reward. Our Father has seen us and says "Well done." People have seen the Father in us. There has been a Son like this. He came from heaven to some lowly shepherds in the back woods of a place called Bethlehem. He came with no fanfare, no trumpets – angels attending, shepherds receiving, laid in a manger. He came to please His Father who said "This is My Son in whom I am well pleased" and because of that mercy has abounded to us. Blessed are the merciful. We have received mercy. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could be together in Your Word. Thank You for the privilege to be Your sons and daughters and serve You in this area. You may be reading this today and you know yours is not the ministry of mercy but yours right now is to receive mercy from Jesus Christ to come and put your trust in Him as Lord and Savior. May I invite you to do that today? You may be reading this and you know Jesus as your Lord and Savior but in your personal life and family life you want to embrace mercy ministry not to be seen and you want to be a part of a church's mercy ministry, not that

we would be seen but that people would see the Father through us. Father, right now begin to guide Your people. Give us tender hearts to do justice, to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God. Father, I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

An outline for the Sermon on the Mount:

Introduction: (Matthew 5:1-2)

I. The Christian, The Gospel and our Character (5:3-12)

II. The Christian, The Gospel and our Ministry (5:13-16)

III. The Christian, The Gospel and the Law (5:17-48)

IV. The Christian, The Gospel and our New Life (6:1-18)

V. The Christian, The Gospel and our Perspective (6:19-34)

VI. The Christian, The Gospel and our Relationships (7:1-20)

VII. The Christian, The Gospel and Commitment (7:21-27)

Conclusion: (7:28-29)