

Series: *G-R-O-W-I-N-G in Christ*
Message Title: **G**enerosity: A Coming Kingdom
Date: Sunday, June 18, 2017
Scripture: Matthew 6
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Location: Warren Baptist Church, Augusta, GA

Introduction

Is *reward* a motivation in Christian life and growth? Some say no. But interestingly, Jesus spoke of rewards:

Matthew 6:1-4—Giving

Matthew 6:6—Prayer

Matthew 6:18—Fasting

“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. 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. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you” (Matthew 6:1-4 ESV).

“But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you... that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you” (Matthew 6:6, 18 ESV).

We can't escape the promise of reward in each of these verses (and other Scriptures) in the teachings of Christ. So let's not try to be more spiritual than Jesus.

There is an end game to our faith, and it is the honor and the affirmation of the Father.

The Fatherhood of God is referenced eleven times in this text, so everything contained here has to do with how our relationship with God affects and applies to all realms of life.

Everyone needs to have a right relationship with their father. While many earthly fathers falter, our Heavenly Father is faithful. No where is this more clearly seen than in His care and concern for His children.

Father-hunger is a reality in our world. Father-hunger is the emptiness experienced when

fathers were or are physically or emotionally absent. There are many people who have never heard affirmation or known affection from their father. But God is a faithful Father, and in His goodness and faithfulness, He sees, He knows and He cares for His own.

The great secret to life is seeing and understanding what it means to be children of a good and faithful heavenly Father.

“But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:12-13 ESV).

We not only have a new relationship, but a new role, a new opportunity—to seek and know the rewards of knowing and living for the honor and glory of our Heavenly Father.

“The great paradox of the Christian reward is this—the person who looks for reward, and who calculates that it is due him does not receive it; the person whose only motive is love, and who never thinks that he has deserved any reward, does, in fact, receive it.” —William Barclay

So here, we have a text filled with paradox and promise, and all of it has to do with how we allow the spiritual commitments of our hearts to impact the physical and material aspects of our lives.

In Matthew 6, Jesus gives direct and decisive instruction concerning possession and need in light of the Fatherhood of God. Jesus provides guidance and instruction regarding the privileges and benefits of our faith.

Let's draw some observations and affirmations that are vital for us today. Each has to do with our Father and His faithfulness in our lives.



Our Heavenly Father Honors Selfless Generosity in His People

See Matthew 6:3-4. Giving Savior = Giving Disciples

Before Christ, there was a world of harsh realities and little concern for relief. After Christ, there was care, reform, hospitals,

orphanages, etc. The exception was Judaism in Old Testament Scriptures.

Charity/philanthropy is believed to be part of the “goodness of the human spirit”. In the five years since Bill Gates and Warren Buffett created the Giving Pledge, 193 individuals have made the simple promise to give more than half of their fortune away during their lifetime or in death.

GROWING in Christ—A growing Christian is a giving Christian. Claiming growth in Christ while separating the use of time, money and talents is inconsistent with the profiles of growth found in Scripture.

What we have is surrendered to God because it has come from God. We have learned the impulse to give can be tainted by the intent to be seen. (Luke 21:1-4—the widow’s mite). Rattling your change, speaking of your contribution, or calling attention to your “goodness” steals the reward.

“Not all giving has to be anonymous, but all giving needs to be without performance.”

Jesus speaks of “hypocrisy” (Greek word is like an actor who wears a mask—someone who uses religion to cover their sins and promote their own gains—manipulation and attention). Not all giving is gifting; some of it is self-seeking.

In this final section on *Growing in Christ*, we are talking about generosity:

“Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7 ESV).

We give to honor and reflect the grace of our Heavenly Father AND to seek the reward of His awareness and pleasure in our giving, sowing and reaping.

Our Heavenly Father Provides Lasting Security For His People

See Matthew 6:19-21.

“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:21 ESV).

The One who sees and rewards is the One who secures our lives and futures.

We all care about the quality of life—clothes, cars, etc. We want things that are made to last. Jesus tells us to focus on things that last—the things we “lay up” in heaven.

Everyone is banking on and trusting in something for their security. The Lord instructs us to make wise investments—things that last.

“Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—each one’s work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire” (1 Corinthians 3:12-15 ESV).

Eternal vs. temporal. Wealth vs. waste!

Our Heavenly Father Confronts Divided Loyalty in His People

See Matthew 6:22-24.

“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money” (Matthew 6:24 ESV).

Serving God and serving money are mutually exclusive. You cannot serve two masters. Which one do you serve?

Possessions are the cause of many prodigals. See Luke 15—“...give me what is mine.”

Because of His faithful love and care, God is unwilling to allow His people to try to live with divided loyalty. Why? Loving money and trusting in it does not create light, but darkness!

This discussion of the eye has to do with eyes being like windows to the body—clear, clean bright, but covered, shaded. When this occurs, the light loses its brilliance and

is tainted. Example: cataracts. There is a warning here against losing spiritual vision because of money.

Look at the Apostle Paul's warning to Timothy:

"But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs" (1 Timothy 6:9-10 ESV).

Generosity reflects clarity; stinginess reflects blindness.

Our Heavenly Father Removes Daily Anxiety From His People

See Matthew 6:25-34.

In this portion of Scripture, our Father offers a remedy for an anxious spirit. Anxiety is such a common reality in life.

I confess anxiety is a struggle for me—preaching, leading, aging, family, finances, future, etc... Anxiety is experienced by all groups of people: students, parents, aging adults, missionaries, etc. Yet, we are told, “Do not be anxious.” Do not let your mind and heart run ahead.

“God’s providence is my peace.”

See Matthew 6:32. One feature of paganism is living only for the present. It is living and acting as if there is no God and nothing other than the here and now.

“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Matthew 6:33 ESV).

You need to live for Him, for His kingdom rule. First! Get your eyes on the right goal, rule, resource, then see how the Father protects and provides.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied” (Matthew 5:6 ESV).

There is a promise: “all these things will be added” (Matthew 6:33b). This is not a prosperity gospel, but a promise of adequacy and something much more—deliverance from anxiety!

“You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You” (Isaiah 26:3 ESV).

Much of life is lived through “conditioned reflex”. Anxiety is one of them! When you see a STOP sign = brakes. Star Spangled Banner = stand. These reflexes are not a result of instinct, but of training and practice.

Let daily “seeking of the Lord” and the knowledge of the goodness of our Heavenly Father become the prompting, impulse of your heart to trust, not stress.

Our Father is a King and He rules over heaven and earth. The kingdoms of this world (ancient Rome in all its glory is in ruins today), yet the Kingdom of God remains and its glory will never fade or fall!

“The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and

He shall reign forever and ever... We give thanks to You, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for You have taken Your great power and begun to reign. The nations raged, but Your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding Your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear Your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth" (Revelation 11:15b, 17-18 ESV).