The Sermon on the Mount #9
Charitable Giving Must be to the Lord (6:1-4)

Introduction:

1. As in the previous chapter (5:1-48), Jesus Christ preached righteousness far superior to that of the Pharisees.
2. Having corrected five popular doctrinal errors, Jesus Christ now condemned their hypocrisy in practice.
3. Having condemned evil abuses of the Law of Moses, Jesus Christ now taught worshipping God in truth.
4. In each of the three acts of worship that follow (6:1-18), Jesus compares true worshippers with hypocrites.
5. In each of the three cases, our Lord Jesus Christ promises the Father's rewarding of the truly righteous.
6. You may know this subject thoroughly, but that is not the issue. What are you doing about this subject?!

The Text Explained

A. Jesus first dealt with the subject of alms, which ought to be done in a reserved manner (Matt 6:1-4).
   1. The pride and hypocrisy of the Pharisees was notorious and incredible to consider (Matt 6:2).
   2. This description could be hyperbolic similar to that of the third verse. It is hard to take it literally.
   3. They boasted of their giving, but cared nothing for those suffering (Luke 13:10-17; 18:9-12).

B. **Alms.** 1. Charitable relief of the poor; charity; notably as a religious duty, or good work.
   1. Alms are the help that a lame man would beg from others (Acts 3:2-3,10 cp Acts 10:2,4,31).
   2. Alms are what Paul brought unto his nation – Israel – for the poor saints there (Acts 24:17).
   3. Dorcas did almsdeeds by making coats and garments for widows – a good work (Acts 9:36-39).

C. Jesus was not dealing with a matter of liberty here, but rather teaching how to rightly keep a duty; alms, or charitable giving to the poor, is not a matter of liberty, but a duty of pure religion (Jas 1:27).

D. Neither was this a new commandment or concept, for it had been taught clearly under the Law of Moses (Leviticus 19:9-10; 23:22; Deuteronomy 14:27-29; 15:7-11; 16:10-14; 24:17-22).
   1. Consider the compassion and kindness of God in giving laws to protect and provide for the poor.
   2. Israelite farmers planted into the corners of their square fields, but they harvested them in circles!
   3. Israelites could not incorporate the year of release into their interest calculations on debt service!
   4. Consider the gravity with which these laws were given, God said, "I am the LORD your God."

E. Our Lord prefaced His instruction for proper almsgiving with a warning to take heed (Matthew 6:1).
   1. There is a very strong impulse in the depraved hearts of men to be seen and praised for alms.
   2. Due to the greed and pride of human nature, giving to the poor is contradictory and difficult; therefore most men that give do it to be seen of others and get an indirect reward for it.
   3. The Jewish religious leaders and the rich were setting a terrible example with public almsgiving.
   4. The Lord Jesus, teaching common people knowledge, did not want them to miss their reward!
   5. While the truly righteous would give without a reward, the Lord mentions the reward thrice.

F. There are great rewards for godly almsgiving, which are forfeited by the evil motive of man's praise.
   1. The Holy Spirit gives assurance you are God's child (Ps 112:1-10; Luke 6:35; I John 3:14-24).
   2. God will bless you abundantly with greater grace for your charity (Ps 112:1-10; II Cor 9:8-11).
   3. God will repay in kind by financial blessing (Pr 11:24; 19:17; 21:13; 22:9; 28:8,27; Luke 6:38).
   4. He will reward in other ways than financial blessing (Ps 41:10; Pr 14:21; Acts 10:1-6; Phil 4:19).
   5. He will reward you on the Day of Judgment (Matt 25:31-46; I Tim 6:17-19; Heb 6:10; 13:16).

G. If alms are given with a goal of being seen of men, then there will be no reward from God in heaven.
   1. The sin that angers God is hypocrisy – pretending great zeal for religion but doing it for praise.
   2. The error is not merely giving your alms in public view, as we shall see clearly (Acts 4:32-37).
   3. The sin here is not doing alms before men, but rather doing them before men to be seen of them!
   4. Giving to the poor for the glory and praise of men is to miss the mark and forfeit God's reward.
   5. Any effort to let men know about your charity to be thought well of by them is to displease God.
   6. If you design by public acts or slips of the tongue to honor yourself, that is all you get – nothing.

H. Our Lord used hyperbole regarding your left and right hand to strongly encourage private giving.
   1. Hyperbole is an obvious exaggeration to make a point that readers understand without confusion.
   2. Exaggeration to embellish your accomplishments for vainglorious pride is entirely different.
   3. The Lord had used strong metaphors by suggesting eye-plucking and hand-amputation (5:29-30).
   4. You know, without any confusion or doubt at all, that you cannot literally keep His words here.
   5. The intent, dictated by the context and the rest of Scripture, is to avoid any ostentatious giving.
   6. Intense secrecy in giving is not the point, for God endorsed humble public giving (Acts 4:32-37).
   7. The sinful practice Jesus condemned was giving charity in order to be seen and admired by men.

I. Giving in secret is only secret as far as men are concerned, for the eyes of the Lord behold it all.
   1. The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good (Proverbs 15:3).
   2. His beholding our evil produces fear; His beholding our good produces confidence and joy.
   3. Your heavenly Father sees in secret Himself – He is not dependent on others telling Him of you.
   4. Your heavenly Father will reward you Himself – you do not need the rewards of public honor.
   5. If you give in secret, God will see your secret giving; and He will reward you openly for it.
   6. A man who has his mind and heart set on impressing others is angered to have to give in secret.
   7. The eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the earth to bless such righteous men (II Chr 16:9).

The Text Applied

A. The text has little meaning for those that do not give; you need to start giving alms even today; pure religion is remembering orphans, widows, and others afflicted souls in their troubles (James 1:27).
B. God will bless the man that considers the poor, which takes conscious effort and actions (Ps 41:1-3).
C. God rewards giving to the poor. It is incredible to watch the greedy get poorer and poorer, because they reason they cannot afford to give, because they must keep it for themselves (Pr 11:24-25). Hah!
D. If you do not have an object for alms now, save your money or give it to the church (I Cor 16:1-2).
E. You can wait for the poor; God will give opportunity. Be ready in heart and purse (I Tim 6:17-19)!
F. We do not use offering plates because they are a common way of tempting men to Pharisee giving.
G. There are two aspects of giving to remember: God loves generosity and cheerfulness (II Cor 9:6-7).
H. Do not forget the priorities and rules of Christian charity: #1, poor in your family; #2, poor in your church; #3, poor in other churches; #4, poor victims God puts in your path, whether sinner or saint.
I. A righteous man does not seek the reward greedily; he sincerely cares for the poor and afflicted and obedience to God whether there is a reward attached or not.
J. The first commandment is loving God, and the second commandment is loving your neighbor as yourself; these two commandments are inseparably tied together (I John 5:1).
K. The poor can also give, though they may give less; Jesus sees two mites given with the right heart; the poor must guard against an evil and wicked heart (Pr 28:3; Luke 21:1-4).
L. Do not forget the conditions for Christian charity: #1, charity does not subsidize sin (Pr 20:4; II Thess 3:10); #2, it provides only necessary wants (Acts 2:44; 4:35; Rom 12:13; Is 58:7); #3, it only takes care of acts of God, not acts of foolishness (James 1:27; Acts 11:27-29).
M. Only true concern for the welfare of others will work, not matter how much you give (I Cor 13:3).
N. All public acts of charity or worship should be to the Lord only, whether it is alms or other worship.
O. Godly men go to work with one of their goals being to get money to give to others (Ephesians 4:28).
P. If you give grudgingly, you lose at least twice: you lose the money, and you lose God's reward!
Q. The Lord even gets involved in telling you who to invite over or out for dinner (Luke 14:12-14).
R. Do you believe it is more blessed to give than to receive? Can you prove it by attitude and action?

Conclusion:

1. You may despise the pride and hypocrisy of Pharisees (Mat 6:2), but when did you last give alms to the poor?
2. Do not excuse yourself because you understand the lesson already? Only excuse yourself if you are giving.
3. If you have a hard time freeing cash for the poor, do you have any comprehension of God's gift (II Cor 8:9)?

For Further Study:

1. The sermon outline, "What about Tsunami Relief?" provides a thorough review of God's priorities for charitable giving.
2. The sermon outline, "II Corinthians 8," which covers Paul's exhortation to the Corinthians to give like the Macedonians.
3. The sermon outline, "II Corinthians 9," which covers Paul's exhortation to the Corinthians to give like the Macedonians.
4. The Proverb commentary, "Proverbs 11:24," which teaches the rewards or punishments of generous or stingy giving.
5. The Proverb commentary, "Proverbs 11:25," which teaches the reward from heaven for liberal giving
6. The Proverb commentary, "Proverbs 19:17," which teaches the Lord's faithfulness to those that give to the poor.
7. The Proverb commentary, "Proverbs 22:9," promises blessings upon the man that considers the poor and gives.
8. The Proverb commentary, "Proverbs 28:8," promises to take from the stingy and give to the generous. Glory!
9. The Proverb commentary, "Proverbs 28:27," promises prosperity to those that scatter their money to the poor.