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Series: The Sermon on the Mount
Message: Investing in Eternity

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Matthew 6:1-4

Someone once said that many people want to serve God. Many people want to serve but they only want to serve Him in an advisory capacity. A lot of people line up to serve God, but they line up to serve Him and to become one of His advisors. The truth of the matter is we probably all would have to plead guilty to that at some point at various points, maybe at too many points, in our life. Maybe you can look back even at this past week and say yeah that was me. I wanted to serve God and I wanted to do so in an advisory capacity. But you know what? When you read the Bible, one of the clearest take-aways of reading the Bible is that God demands and wants absolute and total preeminence in everything. Jesus wants and demands that He be Lord overall. He wants to be Lord over everyone and everything. What the Scriptures say to us in that regard is that this is the call of God on our life. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:31, as well as it could be said anywhere, "whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." Into that highest and holiest calling, to live life every day with the reality that we are to live for the glory of God. What higher calling is there? Whatever it is that you do in life or your daily vocation, whatever it is that God has called you to, this gives the right importance and significance, because you get to do whatever it is – even the most menial things, and we get to do it for the glory of God. So that's the challenge.

That's the high and holy calling. Into that high and holy calling, there enters our fallenness. There enters our sinfulness. There enters our self-centeredness and our selfishness. We do that in a lot of ways. We lay claim to being the Lord of our own life and doing things on our own way in a lot of ways. One of those ways that we do that is we do things for the praise of other people. We do things simply to please somebody else rather than God.

Jesus addresses that in Matthew chapter 6. In Matthew chapter 6, Jesus is going to take on three different areas of life that are very practical, very common, very

ordinary everyday things. Those things that He lists for us are giving, praying and fasting. He is going to speak to us in these three areas. I want to read beginning in verse 1 of chapter 6 of the Gospel of Matthew: "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." Jesus in effect says this. If you want to please people, if you want the praise of people and you get it, because that's what you pursued and that was your goal and that's why you did what you did, if that's what's motivating you and driving you is that somebody else can see you do something and you can get the praise of people and you get it, that's all you get. You got what you wanted and that's all you get. There's no reward from God for those who seek it from others.

This morning we come to the 6th chapter in the Sermon on the Mount. If you haven't been with us we worked our way through chapter 5, we're looking into chapter 6 and chapter 7 is coming. It's all good. It gets better it seems to me as we go on. But here is what we need to do. We need to start with a quick review. We have said the Sermon on the Mount is simply Jesus putting before us in very practical ways what His life looked like on earth. We ask a lot of times what would it look like if Jesus was here walking among us. Here's the answer. It looked like Matthew 5, Matthew 6 and 7, and of course, all of the rest of what we have in the gospels. But it's right here before us. In chapter 5, you remember the focus was primarily on this matter of teaching. It was really Jesus correcting the teaching of the Pharisees. Jesus put forward how the Pharisees taught Scriptures and what He knew the Scriptures to be teaching. It was really putting before them the moral commands of God.

You remember He said things like this: It's not enough for you not to kill somebody. It is required of you to not hate them. It is required of you to not be angry with them. Jesus said it is not enough for you not to commit adultery. It's required of you that you don't lust in your heart in ways that are wrong and violate somebody else.

Jesus said it's not enough to simply love your neighbor. Even, He said, the sinners and the Pharisees do that. He calls on us to even love our enemies. All the way through that 5th chapter Jesus put forward the teaching of what they said the law said and then He corrected it.

Chapter 6. This is what we're going to see. In Chapter 6, the focus is going to come to some very practical things that I just mentioned a moment ago. It comes to us as words of warning so that you see the very first word in the English Standard Version translation is beware. Be careful. Pay attention. What He's about to say comes to us in the form of a warning. Jesus knows our hearts. Remember in the gospel on that one occasion the gospel writer simply said Jesus knowing the heart of man did not give Himself over to them. Jesus knows us, doesn't he? He knows us perfectly. He knows us better than we will ever know ourselves. We ended the 5th chapter in verse 48 with Jesus saying you need to be perfect just as I am perfect. What happens when you come to chapter 6? He just said be perfect. You come to chapter 6 and He says beware. Be careful. He knows our heart. He knows our tendency. What is He concerned about? He's concerned that our holiness could drift over in to hypocrisy.

Let's look at that. Let's look at this matter of holiness turning on its head and becoming hypocrisy. The principle is stated for us in verse 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." Verse 1 just lays out what we're going to see through all of this section and through this lesson this morning. It is very simple. There is no reward from God for those who seek it from others. If you are happy and content to do what you do so other people will see you and pat you on the back, Jesus said you'll probably get that. But that's all you're going to get. You're not going to get reward from your heavenly Father when in your heart you're motivated for the praise of people. This is a call then to have us look at our motives.

We want to start off by talking about right motives. Talking about motives can be a little tricky. Talking about motives can take this into an area that is not always easy to figure out. Why is it that I'm doing this? What's motivating me? The truth of the matter is, being who we are, we have to acknowledge that a lot of times our motives get mixed up.

It doesn't take away the imperative or the call that God puts on us to be motivated by the right things.

Let's look at right motives. Jeremiah chapter 17. You know that verse, but I want to go on from the 9th verse. For the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick. Who can know it? That's the condition of the human heart. Verse 10: I the Lord search the heart and test the mind to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruits of his deeds. That's Jeremiah 17:10 and it is basically saying the very same thing that Jesus is saying here in Matthew chapter 6. Here is where we're going to start. We're going to start with this. In regard to right motives. The first thing I want to ask you: is there a contradiction in what Jesus has previously taught with what He says in chapter 6 verse 1. I know my students. I know my class. I know you guys are already thinking of that contradiction. Your mind has already gone back to a previous message from weeks ago and you're bringing it to mind right now. You're saying that's a really good question. I had that same one. I thought immediately of a contradiction. It takes us back to what Jesus said in Matthew 5:16. He encouraged us to be salt and light and then He said in verse 16 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. In verse 16 Jesus is saying what? You do what you do before other people so they see it and they glorify God. And then we come to chapter 6 verse 1 and what does He say? Don't do things before other people to be seen by other people. I ask you. Is there a contradiction between 5:16 at 6:1? The answer immediately has to be no there isn't because Jesus spoke both of them, right? So again, being good students of Scripture, we remember that one of the primary guides to handling the Word of God accurately is to pay attention to the context.

When you go back to the 5th chapter, you see that the issue in the 5th chapter has to do with how we are going to respond to persecution. What is going to bring on that persecution? What is going to bring it on is living a life the way Jesus calls us to live it in the Beatitudes. You remember those Beatitudes. Blessed are the poor. Blessed are those who mourn. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are the merciful. blessed are those who hunger. Blessed are the peacemakers. When Jesus got to the end of that, He said you need to know one thing. If you live like that, there is going to be a lot of opposition

and persecution. People are going to come against you and are going to push back. In chapter 5, the issue is how are you going to respond to persecution? The tendency in the face of persecution is to do what? It is to hide your allegiance to Christ. The tendency is to hide the fact that you're a disciple, that you're a follower of Christ, to take on the Peter syndrome. You're with Him, aren't you? No, I'm not with Him. In 5:16, clearly the issue is what you do when people come against you for your faith.

When you get to chapter 6 verse 1 that's not the context. That's not the issue in chapter 6 verse 1. The issue is pride. The issue is doing these things to be seen by others for the purpose of their praise. So in 5:16 you don't do something because you're afraid of what somebody else might think. In chapter 6 verse 1 you do something but you do it to be seen by somebody else because your motivation is wrong. So that helps us to understand Jesus is talking about two different things when He brings those two verses.

Secondly, what about this whole matter of working for reward? Working for reward. Jesus uses the word "reward" seven times in this passage. Every so often I have conversations with people and they're apparently uneasy by the idea of being rewarded. They think they should be good for nothing. We should be good for nothing in one sense, right? We are supposed to do good. That is the case. We are to, in one sense I suppose you could say, be good for nothing, but the Bible says a lot about the fact that God rewards His children. Clearly that is what He is speaking of here. The motivation is the key here. What is the motivation? If you're motivated in doing this as Jesus is going to talk about here and your motivation is self-promotion and to look good before other people, then obviously you're pursuing reward for the wrong reason. If you're pursuing reward for the glory of God, if you're pursuing reward to lift up the name of Jesus, that's a totally different matter. The whole doctrine of reward is a wonderful teaching that fills the New Testament pages and we should never pull back or be embarrassed that God has put before us the opportunity for reward because we're going to simply do those things to give glory to Him.

I'll often tease Bonnie about whether she will invite me to her big mansion in heaven and whether I'll get a chance to come and visit her because she's got such a massive award for all of her kindness. When she's feeling good towards me, she says

sure you'll be able to come and visit. When she's not, she'll say well, we'll see. That's what Jesus puts before us right here – to do things for the glory of God. Certainly you have a choice. The choice, my friends, is not between pleasing people and pleasing God. Ultimately what moves us to want to please people is that we really want to please ourselves. The struggle of motives really gets down to am I doing this, am I motivated out of a sense of self pleasure, of self-promotion? Or am I doing it in the way that God calls me to in order to give glory to Him?

Jesus is going to take us right now into an illustration of what wrong motives look like in real life all right. Let's do that. The word "hypocrisy" is used 27 times in the New Testament. 17 of those times is used in the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew has a lot to say about this and it's used three times in just this passage before us this morning. Here's what we're going to see about this matter of hypocrisy. First of all, hypocrites act out of a sense of calculation, not spontaneity. If you want to do a heart check and you want to do a motivation analysis, one of the things that it's good to do is simply think in terms of am I doing what I'm doing with a total buy-in on calculating what I'm doing so that the most people or at least the ones that I want to see will see? Or am I acting out of a sense of spontaneity just because the Holy Spirit may very well be prompting me to act in that way? Hypocrites by definition are calculators. They're thinking the whole time who is watching. Who will see this. The whole idea is that all of the attention will ultimately come back to ourselves.

Secondly, hypocrites focus on the externals. Again, that goes without saying. It is not about the heart. Hypocrites don't spend time examining their heart. Hypocrites are focused on the external things. That's one of the sinister things about getting caught up in simply religious activity. That's why it's so insidious to think that by coming here on Sunday morning at 9:30 that you're doing something that is simply checking a box. It's both calculated and it is at that time all about externals. That's what religion sucks us into. It may be reading the words so we can check the box. Saying a five-minute prayer so we can check the box. It's always about the externals and Jesus pulls us back from that. He says it's ultimately about the heart.

Lastly, hypocrisy uses the right words and the right actions to cover the wrong motives. Again, hypocrisy can look so good on the outside but it may very well be a

mess on the inside. Let's see that principle illustrated. In verses 3 through 18 we have these three subjects: giving, praying and fasting. Pharisees were all in on giving, praying and fasting. Jesus says this to us. You can engage yourself in the highest spiritual activities that we know and you can do it all for the wrong reasons. That's what happened. Giving, praying and fasting are things that we would say are good things. those are things that I want to grow in. I want to pursue. I want to know more about those things. Jesus says you can engage even in the highest level of spiritual activity and you can do it all for the wrong reasons.

Let's look at what He means when He says that. We're just going to be talking about giving this morning. In your outline you have a number one. Those of you that are outliners, there's no 2 and there's no 3 this morning, so please forgive me for that. That'll come later. Giving. Giving is before us. Jesus starts off and says right action, wrong motive. Verse 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." We're going to expand on this principle and maybe a few others with it. But what we see in verse 2 is we're not to give for the praise of people. We're thinking here primarily of financial giving. We're thinking here of the matter of generosity with our resources. Jesus says we're not to do it for the praise of people. The way He words it is don't sound a trumpet when you give.

What does it mean to sound the trumpet when you give? Some people suggest that literally somebody sounded the trumpet when they gave. Maybe there was a trumpeter and his job was to see who was coming and who was giving. I don't know how that would work. A trumpet blast as the offering plate was passed? It's not likely that it was a literal trumpet playing. It could've been metaphorical. We have the expression "toot your own horn" but that's reading something that we say today back into the 1st century. It is very unlikely that they went around saying "don't toot your own horn." It's very likely that what Jesus has in view here is something literal but not a trumpet player. It is possible, and this is an explanation that's been attested to by many historians, that in the Temple itself there was a container in which money was dropped and had something of the shape of a trumpet. There was a larger opening where the money went in and then it kind of curled and went down into a container. You can

imagine if that were the case you'd put your money in the receptacle and then clang clang clang, the money goes all the way down into the bottom. It would make a lot of noise.

How would we translate that over into today's world from the 1st century to the 21st century when Jesus says don't give for the praise of people? I think in part wouldn't it speak to how we give and how we appeal to people to give? On the basis of that we could very well be sounding a trumpet. We give so that we'll be seen by people. Our name will get put out there in some way. We'll get attention. We'll get publicity. Now here's what has always been striking to me. We have lots of principles in the New Testament about giving money and resources and all that. Many of them touch right on this area of motivation. Doing something good and right like giving but doing it for the right reason. It has always been striking to me that within the church, within Christian circles, we know that, but then we construct appeals so that people will give financially and we appeal to their flesh to get them to give. That has always struck me as one of the oddest things that we do at times. We say to people we want you to give and we want you to give for the right reasons. We want you to give for the glory and praise of God and then we construct financial appeals that are directed right to the flesh and the desire that someone has for the very thing that Jesus says we're not to do. So you have the right action but you have the wrong motive. Giving is clearly a good thing. Giving so that other people will know that I'm giving is obviously the wrong thing.

The second principle that I could draw from this. We're not to give under pressure. We're not to give under pressure. We're not to give under compulsion. Can you imagine being the person behind the guy who just sounded the trumpet in the temple? He gave a lot and there was a lot of clanging and a lot of noise and everybody was looking over to see who dumped in the whole bag of money and you're right behind the guy. What would you do? I know what you would do. You would do what I would do. You'd go make change. You'd go and say I have four quarters. Can I have 10 dimes? Or maybe better do you have 100 pennies? There is that sense of pressure, the sense of compulsion that somebody just sounded the trumpet and you don't want to be the one that everybody is looking at that doesn't give accordingly. It's the very thing that Jesus touched on in Mark 12 when he lifted up the widow who gave two mites. They

were watching this very interaction. They were watching some very wealthy person sound the trumpet and all the money clanged and went down into the trumpet. Then there's the widow. She steps up right behind the guy and you didn't even know she put anything in there so small was the sound. Jesus pulled His disciples back. He asked them who just gave the most money. Of course in their mind they thought they had the answer for once and it wasn't that answer. It was the widow who dropped the two mites. True grace giving comes not from pressure not from compulsion. Remember in 1 Corinthians 16 Paul said he was coming to visit them and he said I don't want you to take an offering when I come. Now that will get the finance committee attention right there because the apostle Paul is coming. They want everybody to be ready to give an offering when Paul is there. Paul says I don't want any pressure. I don't want anybody to feel compelled to give because I'm there. You take care of all of that before I ever get there and whatever you have I'll take and will pass along to the Jerusalem believers who are poor. This principle is you don't give for compulsion, for pressure. You give because you want to.

Thirdly, we give ourselves first. We don't simply give our money. We're to give ourselves first. Paul speaks about that in 2 Corinthians chapter 8. If we struggle with the motivation of giving I can almost assure you that we haven't given of ourselves first. When you give of yourself first, when your heart is beating with Romans 12 – I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God that you give yourself first and foremost to God. All the other stuff that you have in your life is in your open hand. If you haven't first given yourself to God, then it's hard for you to let go of that stuff that He's entrusted to you. Paul says you give yourself first and you don't even worry about the amount. God's looking at the attitude. God's looking at the heart and if you've got nothing to give, God receives it. If you've got a lot to give, God receives it. But what He is interested first and foremost is that you give yourself first.

Then the last one. We're not to give to fulfill the law. We're to give out of love. Let me say it this way. We're no longer to give under the obligation of the Old Testament tithe but now we give on the basis of the grace of God that is at work in our life. Paul says in 2 Corinthians chapter 8 verse 8: I say this not as a command. If there was ever a time for him to say I'm saying this because we were commanded this in the Old

Testament, we are still to tithe. No, we live under the New Covenant. We live in the age of grace. We are not required to give a percentage. By the way, the Old Testament Jew living under the law tithed. Yes, they did. They tithed 23 1/3% of their income. I always say to people in the new members class, we don't teach the tithe here, but if you want to biblically tithe, we invite you to come into that experience with us. 23 1/3%. God says give as He has prospered. I take that to mean when God has prospered you what you do? You just automatically are motivated to give back more. In those leaner years, you're not able to give as much as you might have previously. For some people, the tithe is a burden. For some people, the tithe is a limitation. That's why Paul so rightly speaks to this matter by telling us to give according to as God has prospered.

Listen to what Spurgeon said. "Earn all you can. Save all you can. Then give all you can. Never try to save out of God's cause. Such money will canker the rest. Giving to God is no loss. It is putting your substance into the best bank. Giving is true having. As the old gravestone said of the dead man: What I spent, I had. What I saved, I lost. What I gave, I have." That's what God has called us to. That's doing the right thing but for the wrong reason.

Let's look quickly at what it means to do the right thing and to do it in the right way. Verses 3 and 4 of Matthew 6: Jesus says "but [in contrast to what he just said] 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 you in secret will in fact reward you." First thing, giving is to be done in private. Similar to that first one on the other side. Giving is to be without pressure. Here the other side of that is giving is to be done in private. Jesus puts it this way. Don't let your right hand know what your left hand is doing. Does Jesus mean we're to be one-handed givers? What does He mean when He says don't let the left hand know what the right hand is doing? Let me ask you this? Is all public giving wrong? Is it just by virtue of what we've already said wrong in every circumstance or situation for somebody to know that somebody has given? Maybe even to know what they have given. Could that ever be right? If you said yes you are right.

In Numbers 7. Almost the whole chapter amazed me this week as I looked back at this. Numbers 7 is a chapter in which God names people by name and He names

what they gave. In the book of Acts as the early church began, it speaks about people selling their possessions. People in the church knew who was doing that. They knew people were selling things and then giving the money to share within the body. In chapter 4 it actually names Barnabas. It says he went out and sold this property and he brought the money and gave it to the apostles so that they could use it within the life of the church. It's not so much that the left hand and the right-hand don't know what they're doing. It is not that we have to write out a check with one hand. The "beware" that Jesus speaks of here is don't let your right hand or your left hand know what the other is doing. It is don't let your heart dwell too long on it for the purpose of self-praise. I think that's the way Jesus is speaking to us here. have an attitude of self-forgetfulness. Don't give with your left hand and be patting yourself on the back with your right hand. Don't give with your right-hand and be waving at everybody so that they make sure and see what you've done in terms of giving.

Just a very practical note here at Covenant. As you give, there is a tiny tiny group of people who know what the giving is at Covenant Community Church. It is not made up of the pastors or the elders. Our bookkeeper knows. Her direct report knows. That's about it. That is a principle that we believe is very important. I have no idea what any of you give to Covenant Community Church. We do that purposely. We do that not only because it's Biblical. We do that because we don't want to fall into the very thing that Jesus warns us of. We don't want to be elevating somebody because we know they're a big giver. This is the principle that God puts forward and we are to do our giving with a sense of self-forgetfulness before him.

Secondly, giving is the responsibility of each person. Did you notice that in verse 2 He talks about when you give, when you give. He doesn't say if you give. But when you give. Here's what people think. Oh, you don't teach the tithe at Covenant. Then people don't have to give any more, do they? That's nonsense. The New Testament is filled with commands and some of those commands have to do with giving. We're commanded to give. It's a responsibility that's driven out of a sense of grace, just not an obligation of the law. Of course we are called to give. Grace simply causes us to give out of a sense of joy because of what God has done for us. It's a privilege and responsibility. We can all exercise the spiritual gift of giving. If you say I don't have the

spiritual gift of giving so I don't have to give. You may not have the gift of evangelism but you're still called to evangelize, to share the gospel. We are all to be givers.

Then the third one. The attitude again is more important than the amount. These kind of mirror the ones under the wrong motivation. That's the whole point of verse 2. Sounding the trumpet. No, it's not the amount that is important. It's not making a lot of noise while you're giving. It is what is your heart attitude before God.

Then lastly, giving is to be proportionate. Giving is to be generous. Giving is to be sacrificial. We could take one Sunday on each one of those points. Giving is to be proportionate. Again, it simply means that as God blesses you, then you give more. That's called proportionate giving. Giving is to be generous. The greatest antidote to covetousness, which is one of the predominant sins in America and I daresay in the church, is generosity. Living life with open hands and recognizing that everything that you have God has given to you and by the way it will all be gone tomorrow. So we live out of a sense of proportion, out of a sense of generosity and sacrificially. Who is it that Jesus elevates in the Gospels as the greatest giver? The woman who gave the least of everybody, but it was sacrificial. It was sacrificial. The Macedonian believers that Paul appealed to to help the poor believers in Jerusalem. They were dirt poor. They were the poorest church that Paul received monies from and they gave proportionally. They gave generously. They gave sacrificially to the things that were on the heart of God.

So what do we take away? The praise of people comes and goes. It's brief and it's fleeting. If that's what you want and you get it, you got it. But listen. When you act out of devotion to God, when you say God I want to do this for Your glory, to lift up Your name, when you do it for that reason His "well done" echoes throughout all of eternity. I hope you look at that as I do and say that, my friends, is amazing. That's incredible. How unbelievable is that and how encouraging should that be to us to be people who are generous and sacrificial and giving for the glory of God. At the end of the day, nobody can out give God. It is at the cross Paul says in 2 Corinthians that we have this inexpressible gift. Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift. God doesn't want your money, my friend, as a pathway to heaven. God doesn't want your good works in hopes that you'll one day see the scale tip in your favor. Here's the bad news. That scale is never going to tip in your favor because no matter how much good stuff is on your side

of the scale, the holiness and righteousness of God is out of reach for all of us. It is the righteousness of Christ that has put us into that equation. He has put onto our side that which balances that out and allows God because of the cross to say to us you're my son, you're my daughter, simply by faith and trust in Jesus. If you're here this morning and you've spent a good part of your life going to church and doing good things and giving your money, those are good but they're not going to get you to heaven. Only to those who have put their faith and trust in Christ alone does God give the gift of eternal life.

Let's pray. Father God, we are a blessed people. We are a people, Father, who have experienced Your abundant and amazing grace. We want to live and we want to respond in like manner. Motivate us by Your Spirit, Father, that we would give importance as You have given to us. Father, I pray right now in this closing moment of this morning if there is someone here who does not know for sure where they are going to spend eternity that they will seek out somebody that they know, that they will come and talk with somebody here in the front at the end of our morning, that they may know the grace of God in their life and the forgiveness that comes through Christ. We pray in Jesus's name, amen.