Building an Indestructible Life

*Religion That Is Genuine*

Matthew 6:1-18

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1. Matt 6:1-18 - Giving, Praying and Fasting
   1. In this section of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus focuses on three key aspects of religion
      1. Giving – Exodus 23:10-11; Lev 19:9-10
      2. Prayer – Matt 6:9-13, Luke 11:1-4
      3. Fasting – Luke 2:37 (Anna), Luke 18:12
   2. The structure
      1. Jesus builds these three points with similar structure
         1. Beware of doing something just to be seen… (6:1, 5, 16)
         2. If you do, being admired is all the reward you get (6:1b, 5b, 16b)
         3. This is how you should do it instead (6:2-4, 6, 17-18)
         4. God will see it and remember / reward you (6:4b, 6b, 18b)
      2. The temptation is to take important aspects of our relationship with God, and instead of making it about God, we make it about ourselves
   3. When we live religion to be seen by others we are lying
      1. It is a lie to others
         1. See 2 Cor 11:14, John 8:44
      2. It is a lie to God
         1. We cannot lie to God – see 1 Sam 16:7
         2. 2 Cor 5:10 - There is going to be a day of judgment
      3. Lastly, it is a lie to ourselves
         1. We would lie to ourselves in order to live an even bigger lie
         2. Gal 6:7-9 – We will reap the fruits…
2. Why would we ever want to lie to others, ourselves and to God?
   1. Maybe we would like to be better than we really are
      1. To follow God, we are called to a drastic change in our lives
      2. Matt 5:43-48 – A different way to live
         1. 5:44 – Loving my enemy?
         2. 5:44b – Praying for those who persecute me?
         3. 5:46-47 – Ultimately, being different from the world by doing more than the others do?
         4. 5:48 – Being perfect as my heavenly Father is perfect?
            1. This is not just “sinlessness”
            2. This is loving those that hate me, too
            3. This is responding to evil with good

This is being like Jesus in all aspects of His life, not just striving not to sin

Sinlessness is the arrival point, not the starting point

* + 1. How am I ever going to get to be like Jesus wants me to be?
       1. It may be hard, so I can just find myself acting rather than being
       2. As long as I do all those things, people will think that I am living my Christianity the way I should be
  1. Maybe we are envious of a higher standard around us
     1. Maybe there is a friend or someone we admire, who is doing a lot better than we are
     2. See Barnabas
        1. Acts 4:36-37 – He is called “Son of Encouragement”
           1. He truly was the one to be admired by others
           2. He sold a piece of land…
        2. Acts 5:1-5 – Ananias and Sapphira wanted to be just as popular
           1. They too wanted to look like they had contributed to others’ needs
           2. But they did it because they wanted to look generous, rather than wanting to be generous
  2. Why does Jesus address these aspects of living religiously?
     1. They are the most evident ways in which one lives their religion
     2. However, in essence, religion is not about me, it is about God
        1. We cannot expect to get to know Jesus and not change who we are

1. So, what does God expect of me?
   1. God expects us to be genuine
      1. In our society we are surrounded by tools and ways to distract ourselves from honestly looking and seeing our desperate spiritual condition
      2. The problem is that the culture we live in has the power to cure us and shape our perceptions and values
         1. Instead, Phil 1:9-11 and Eph 2:10 – We are here to live for God
   2. God expects us to be changed
      1. We cannot expect to get to know Jesus and not change who we are
         1. The words of Jesus make us uncomfortable
         2. The words of Jesus call us to change or to be condemned
      2. Rom 12:2 – We are not to be like everyone else
2. True religion
   1. Giving
      1. What you give – who does it belong to?
         1. Psalm 50:9-12 – Who does it belong to?
      2. We are just managers of what God has given us
         1. See Lev 25:23, John 13:27b-29
         2. It is not ours to begin with; much less is this about us
         3. However, more valuable than money is our time - Mark 2:14-17
   2. Fasting
      1. We do not do this as much today
         1. Jesus says “when you fast…” not “if you fast…”
      2. Understandably, too many religious groups have established fasting reasons and days and times – but that is not what Jesus says here
      3. True fasting may involve more than just food
         1. It is more than just food
         2. Food is an immediate need, but all the stuff we focus so much on may be an indicator as to which kingdom our loyalty lies with
         3. Eccl 5:19 – This is the gift of God, but keep the right balance
   3. Think about prayer
      1. Prayer is one of the strongest signs of our relationship with God
         1. Quality and frequency of prayer
      2. Two short observations about this prayer
      3. 6:13 – Lead us not into temptation – comes way before sin!
      4. 6:10 – “Your kingdom come, Your will be done” – it is not about me!
         1. The kingdom is where the will of God is done
         2. See Rom 12:1, Jer 31:33
      5. Matt 6:14-15 – Forgiveness is a way we become more like God
3. A final invitation
   1. Do not be a hypocrite – do not live religion to be seen by others, however…
   2. When you see someone doing something inconsistent with what they say they believe in, they may need your help, not your accusation
      1. After all when we point the finger at someone, do we just do it to find an excuse to go live the way we want to?
      2. Do not be more of a hypocrite than those at whom you are pointing the finger!