

JESUS ON TRUE SPIRITUALITY (MATTHEW 6:1-18)

Video One

Jesus begins this section of his sermon with a warning.

'Be careful' – he says. Watch out.

He tells us to be on the look out for something that can creep into our lives without us realising. And it's this: fake spirituality.

Jesus says: 'be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them.'

Jesus knows that as religious people live their lives and do religious things, they are often more concerned with who *sees them* doing those things. And he says – don't be like these people.

Jesus calls these people 'hypocrites'.

A hypocrite in Jesus' eyes is not someone who does good things in public, but in secret does bad things.

No. A hypocrite is someone who does the right thing. But is driven by the wrong motivations. To be seen. To look impressive.

To illustrate his point, Jesus talks about 3 common practices for every religious person at the time.

The first is **giving to the needy**. At a time when there were no government schemes to help the vulnerable. It was the job of the religious community to look after **people in poverty**. It's a good thing to do.

But Jesus says – **when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honoured by others.**

Don't give to **people** and make a big show about it. To be seen.

The second religious practice Jesus highlights is **prayer**. In Jewish culture there were three times in the day where people would participate in prayers.

But Jesus says – **“when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others.**

When prayer time comes around – don't strategically stand in the place where the most people will be able to see you.

And the last religious practice is **fasting**. Fasting was a common practice at the time.

But Jesus says – “When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting.”

Don’t deliberately make it look like you’re fasting. To be seen.

Giving, and Prayer, and Fasting are good things to do. Just as going to church and sharing your faith are good things to do. Jesus expects us to do them! And it’s not wrong if other people see you doing them.

But Jesus warns us about our *motivations*. Be careful that you’re not doing these things just to be *seen*. Don’t practice fake spirituality.

Jesus repeated explains why. People who do these things just *to be seen* to do them – they have received their reward in full.

Right there and then – they receive their reward. The reward of people thinking they’re great. The reward of people thinking that they are good religious people. But that’s it.

Ultimately, we’ll see, they miss out. They receive “no reward from your Father in heaven.”