

The Ethics of Jesus Kingdom Part 2: A Greater Focus

The Internet is such a great place to hide - to pretend to be more than we are. Facebook is bad enough, but dating sites like OkCupid and Match.com are some of the best places to fashion our own avatars. An avatar is the alter ego we want others to see and to know us by. Religion can be another place to hide and develop spiritual avatars by doing religious practices for show - things like public prayer, living by our titles and referring to the good things we have done at just the right moment. This was what Jesus hated most about the Pharisees who were considered by many to be the most committed of all the religious groups in his day. The Pharisees were a lay movement that rigidly practiced Jewish law. They even followed rules surrounding the law to protect it and keep them from breaking it. This is how they appeared to be so devoted. But it's also why they came into such conflict with Jesus – because Jesus saw right through their pretense. They practiced their right living before men instead of God. When religious practice, in spite of our poverty of spirit, bubbles up from God's blessing we are living from the new self being formed by God instead of our self-made avatars fashioned for the attention and praise of men. This is the spirituality of the kingdom – spirituality from the inside out!

Journey Together:

- 1). What are some of the most ridiculous lies you have seen on the Internet?
- 2). What are some pretentious things you have said or done on the Internet?
- 3). What are some pretentious things you have seen or done at church?

Road Map: Matthew 6

- 4). Matthew 6 is about “practicing our righteousness to be seen by others”. What does this look like? When and where have you seen this? Have you ever been tempted to pretend that you are more spiritual than you really are? Why are we tempted to do this?
- 5). Jesus says to practice our faith in secret. What does he mean by a “secret” faith? Why does He instruct us to pray, give and make promises in secret? What relationship do these practices

have with the beatitudes and the “better” righteousness of Matthew 5?

- 6). In what way is giving to others a spiritual discipline? How have you been blessed by giving something away?
- 7). What do you find most rewarding, difficult, frustrating or easy about prayer? How does the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples help you in your own communion with God?
- 8). What does Jesus mean by “storing up our treasures in heaven?” How is this a spiritual discipline? How is our relationship with earthly goods an insight into our soul and what relationship does this have with the beatitudes of Matthew 5 and the “better righteousness of the kingdom”?
- 9). What does Jesus mean by seeking first the kingdom? What is the relationship between the spiritual practices of Matthew 6 and “seeking first the kingdom?”

Discipleship challenge: Jesus is challenging us in our spiritual practices. Focus this week on your prayer life, the help you give to others and the value you place on material things. How can you tell if these practices are for God or to be seen by others?

- 10). How can this group pray for you right now?

My Journey:

- 1). How has God been using journey in your life this week to do *Great Things* for Him?
- 2). How has God been guiding in the practices of your heart this week?
- 3). How can this group pray for you today?