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| Matt 6:1-18  | “Pretenders” | Pinelands – 9am – 14/01/2024Thornton – 10:30am – 14/01/2024 |

In a Small University Town bar frequented by students ran the following ad on social media during the days before Parents Weekend:

***"Bring Your Parents for Lunch on Saturday.***

 ***We’ll Pretend We Don’t Know You!"***

The ad was soon challenged by a local Church, who posted a revised invitation… ***"Bring Your Parents to Church on Sunday.***

 ***We’ll Pretend We Do Know You!"***

**There is a lot of pretending in life isn’t there?**

We have heroes that we almost worship only to find out…

 …they were pretending to be someone they were not.

We have political leaders who claim to be champions of the

 poor only to find out…

they are using the poor for votes.

**PEOPLE USE PEOPLE** **to get what they want.**

Maybe some of you here today have…

Done that… or… felt that sting.

When it comes to ***FAITH…* God** *is looking for people* who are…

 ***NOT…* PRETENDERS**

**Not just** Pretending to be committed.

**Not just** doing their duty.

**Truly Committed** to Him,

Doing our ***“religious”*** duty… ***IS NOT*** enough?

There is way more to FAITH than…

Religious Duty

Going through the motions

**GOD… Expects MORE than that.**

To the Jew there were ***three great cardinal works of religious life…***

 ***Charity, Prayer, and Fasting.***

Jesus did not have a problem with these things.

He just had a problem with doing them with the wrong motive.

A person may give charity **not to** really help the person in need,

**but to** demonstrate their own generosity…

so they can receive praise for doing it.

One can pray **in such a way** that your prayer is **not really…**

 addressed to God, but to others.

One may fast, not really for the good of one’s own soul,

**but to simply show off** one’s self-disciplined character.

There are passages in the Old Testament that…

***Warn of…*** **Meaningless Offerings**  *(Isaiah 1)*

Just going through the rituals.

**GOD WANTS MORE THAN THAT**

**GOD wants Purity and Righteousness in what we do.**

***He wants*** us to worship,

***He wants us*** to do good deeds, and help those in need.

***God wants us*** to pray and fast…

**BUT…** He wants us to ***do it for the right reasons*** and that is…

 **NOT** to draw attention to ourselves **but to GOD**

**NOT to** glorify ourselves but ***to glorify God.***

In our gospel reading… the ***‘Hypocrites’*** are the ***‘PRETENDERS’***

Note the WARNINGS… because that is what the pretenders do…

**DO NOT…**

Vs 1… Attract attention – with your good deeds

 No big show… so your closest friend…

should not know about it.

 Do not let your one hand know what the other is doing

**DO NOT…**

Vs5… Try to impress others – when praying

 No big show… Others need not know you are praying

 No big meaningless words OR unnecessary long prayers

**DO NOT…**

Vs16… Appear spiritual – when fasting
 No big show… Others need not know you are fasting

 No special clothes OR sad faces

These warnings apply to all our spiritual disciplines…

 *Bible Reading, Serving, Study,*

 *Proclaiming, Tithing, Worship,*

**A.B. Bruce** summed it up well…

 ***“Show when tempted to hide” and…***

 ***“Hide when tempted to show.”***

**If it points to me…** ***It is wrong…***

 **If it points to God…** ***It is right.***

Although there are **WARNINGS…**

**NOTE also** the **ENCOURAGEMENTS…**

**Firstly…**

**Scripture says…** **When** ***you give…***

 **When** ***you pray…***

 **When** ***you fast…***

***Jesus assumes*** that this is *what we are going to be doing…*

**He does not say…**

**IF** you give… **IF** you pray… **or…** **IF** you fast…

It is almost as if ***Jesus ASSUMES we will…***

 Be doing these things… Giving, Praying and Fasting

 *As well as the other disciplines.*

**The encouragement is** ***to practice*** **these disciplines.**

 Make them part of your daily life

**GIVING…** - **How good are you in this area?**

 - **Do you tithe** your income to God?

 - **Do you give** to the poor, to those in need?

I know you cannot give to everybody and to everything…

 But work out where you can give…

 Listen to God, listen to the Holy spirit

 Listen to your heart…

***I challenge you to…*** consciously Give something…

to one person every week.

 *(Anybody… vagrant, friend, stranger…*

 *Not only a reactionary gift – although that is good*

***BUT…*** *conscious effort to give and meet a need)*

**PRAYER…** *(We spoke about this last week if you remember)*

- How do you fair in this area?

 - **Do you spend time in pray** with God each day?

 - Maybe you **only pray when in an emergency**

***JOKE:***

Three preachers sat discussing the best positions for prayer, while a telephone repairman worked nearby.

***"Kneeling is definitely best,"*** claimed one.

***"No,"*** another contended. ***"I get the best results standing with my***

 ***hands outstretched to Heaven."***

***"You’re both wrong,"*** the third insisted. ***"The most effective prayer***

 ***position is lying prostrate, face down on the floor."***

The repairman could contain himself no longer.

***"Hey, fellas,"*** he interrupted, ***"the best prayin’ I ever did***

 ***was hangin’ upside down from a telephone pole."***

Most of you pray I know… **BUT…**

***Here is the challenge…***

 If you **do** already pray regularly…

 *Spend 5 more minutes* everyday in prayer.

 If you **do not** pray regularly…

 *Spend 5 minutes* everyday in prayer…

 Pray the Lord’s prayer,

Thank the Lord for a blessing

 and pray for one other need each day.

*Might be* – 5 minutes… after lunch, after your morning work,

 Outside in your garden…

 ***BUT*** slice out 5 minutes in your day to pray.

**FASTING…** - How good are you in this area?

 *- I am really weak in this area…*

Fasting is a voluntary abstinence from food

*(for one or more of the following reasons)*

 - for penitence for past sin (forgiveness)

 - to improve self-discipline / self control

 - to go without food and to share the cost of that

 food with the needy or the undernourished

- to spend time in prayer (something specific)

 (instead of eating you pray)

*In scripture Prayer and Fasting are often couple together.*

***BUT here is the challenge…***

For the next 3 weeks to fast for one day…

 - After breakfast to only drink water for the day until supper

 (some might want to skip breakfast and / or supper)

 **BUT…** Then to pray for a need when you feel hungry

 And / or when you would normally have eaten.

 Pray for… Our Church

 Our Prayer List

 Our Country

**Conclusion**

Remember **IT IS NOT** about…

***PRETENDING…*** showmanship

 ***Or…*** just doing all the right things…

 ***Or…*** doing our religious duty.

 ***Or…*** going through the motions

***IT IS ABOUT…*** God working in us

 Us working with God actively participating

 **In activities that grow us…**

 ***For the Glory God.***

Earlier in Matt 6 – Jesus says… ***“Let your light shine”***

 ***That really means let God’s Light shine though you.***

 ***For His Glory***

**It is all about… Drawing Attention to God.**

**Matthew 6:1-18 Teaching about Charity**

“Make certain you do not perform your religious duties in public so that people will see what you do. If you do these things publicly, you will not have any reward from your Father in heaven.

“So when you give something to a needy person, do not make a big show of it, as the hypocrites do in the houses of worship and on the streets. They do it so that people will praise them. I assure you, they have already been paid in full. But when you help a needy person, do it in such a way that even your closest friend will not know about it. Then it will be a private matter. And your Father, who sees what you do in private, will reward you.

**Teaching about Prayer**

“When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites! They love to stand up and pray in the houses of worship and on the street corners, so that everyone will see them. I assure you, they have already been paid in full. But when you pray, go to your room, close the door, and pray to your Father, who is unseen. And your Father, who sees what you do in private, will reward you.

“When you pray, do not use a lot of meaningless words, as the pagans do, who think that their gods will hear them because their prayers are long. Do not be like them. Your Father already knows what you need before you ask him. This, then, is how you should pray:

‘Our Father in heaven:

 May your holy name be honored;

 may your Kingdom come;

 may your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today the food we need.

Forgive us the wrongs we have done,

 as we forgive the wrongs that others have done to us.

Do not bring us to hard testing,

 but keep us safe from the Evil One.’

“If you forgive others the wrongs they have done to you, your Father in heaven will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive the wrongs you have done.

**Teaching about Fasting**

“And when you fast, do not put on a sad face as the hypocrites do. They neglect their appearance so that everyone will see that they are fasting. I assure you, they have already been paid in full. When you go without food, wash your face and comb your hair, so that others cannot know that you are fasting—only your Father, who is unseen, will know. And your Father, who sees what you do in private, will reward you.