Matthew
Biblical Giving (Part 2)
Matthew 6:2-4
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Tom Pennington, Pastor-Teacher
Countryside Bible Church, Southlake, Texas

I want to begin today by asking you a question, a question I don't want you to answer out loud, obviously, but a question I want you to genuinely answer in your heart. “Do you think of yourself as wealthy?” “Do you think of yourself as wealthy?” Most of us don't, and that's because when we think about it at all, we tend to compare ourselves with the rich and famous, or, if it's the people around us, rarely do we compare ourselves to those with less; we typically compare ourselves to those who have larger homes and drive nicer cars. But the truth is, every adult here this morning is wealthy.

And I can prove that to you mathematically, statistically. The latest data shows that the bottom 10% of the world's adults, the bottom 10%, make less than $1,100 a year. But even more surprising is that the median income of the world's adult population is only $11,500 a year. That means if you make more than that, you make more than half of the people, half of the adults on this planet, those who work. If you make more than $65,000 a year, you are in the top 10% of the highest paid adults on planet earth. Here's the point, when it comes to biblical giving, which our Lord is addressing in the passage we're in; in “The Sermon on the Mount,” if you live in the U.S. and you have a job, you're wealthy–that's the truth! So if you are not giving to the Lord consistently, the problem is not your income, which is what we tend to tell ourselves. It's either your heart or it's your stewardship of what the Lord has given you.

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We are studying Matthew, chapter 6, verses 1 to 18. The “General Principle” in this passage is stated in verse 1, we must “Beware of the deadly danger of hypocrisy.” Look at verse 1, “Beware,” Jesus says, “of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven.” That's the general principle. And then beginning in verse 2, down through verse 18, Jesus gives “Three Specific Examples.” You'll notice in verse 2, “When you give;” Verse 5, “When you pray;” and verse 15, “When you fast.” Those are the three examples He uses.

Now, we are studying His first example, the example of biblical giving. Let's read the paragraph again, which I hope to finish today, Matthew, chapter 6, verse 2:

> “So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees *what is done* in secret will reward you.”

Now, the point of this paragraph is that, as we seek to obey Scripture's clear command to give, we must be careful to avoid the danger of hypocrisy. As I pointed out to you last time, in these verses there are “Four Crucial Insights into this Issue of Biblical Giving.” Last time, we just considered the first of those insights. It's this, “The Required Activity of Biblical Giving,” the required activity of biblical giving. Verse 2 begins, “When you give to the poor.” Now, to understand the cultural context, we stepped back from our text last week and examined “The Old Testament Israelites ‘Giving.’” What was required under Old Testament law?

The Mosaic law required, first of all, three tithes. Not one, but three tithes that together amounted to about 25% of a person's annual income. That included, by the way, one of the tithes was for the poor, which factors into our text. Those tithes were taxes. In the New Testament era, if you pay your taxes, and I hope you do, we're commanded to, you tithe by paying your taxes. But in addition to their tithes or taxes, the Old Testament also required God's people to offer what are called “Freewill Offerings.” You get what they are from the name. You decide, and you decide how much. Free will offerings, and those Old Testament freewill offerings are the closest equivalent to New Testament giving.

So we then considered “The New Testament Believer’s Giving.” We are not commanded to tithe; we're commanded to pay our taxes. But we are still responsible to give offerings, freewill offerings to the Lord from our hearts. And we unpacked the basic principles of New Testament giving from 1 Corinthians, chapter 16, verses 1 to 3. Let me just remind you of them. This is what we learned last time. First of all, our giving “Is commanded by Christ.” Paul directed, directed is the word he uses, ‘ordered.’ He ordered all the churches, and he ordered all the believers in all the churches to give.

Secondly, we learned in that passage that our giving “Should be consistent and systematic.” Every believer was to bring, on the first day of every week, their gift. Doesn't mean we have to give every week; it simply means that it's to be consistent, it is to be systematic in keeping with how we are paid and how frequently we are paid.

Thirdly, our giving “Should primarily flow through the church.”

And number four, our giving “Should reflect our financial ability, but the amount is entirely our free decision before the Lord.” The language of the New Testament is twofold: “As you are

prospered," that is in keeping with your financial ability, and "as he determines in his heart," that's your free decision. And the New Testament adds, but only "what you can do cheerfully." Listen, God doesn't need your money. He wants you to give with a cheerful heart, an eagerness to support the work that He is about.

And number five, our giving "Should serve to accomplish God's established priorities for giving." What are those? We looked at them last week. First of all, "Supporting missionaries," (Acts 13:3; Phil. 4:15; 3 John 7-8). Secondly, "Supporting the ministry of the local church" that we are a part of. And thirdly, "Helping those in need," (1 Cor. 16:3). And it's that third, helping those that are in need, that Jesus is talking about in Matthew, chapter 6. So, that's "The Required Activity of Biblical Giving. "

Now today, I want us to begin by considering, secondly, "The Hypocrite's Approach to Giving." You want to know how to give hypocritically, how to be a hypocrite when you give? Here it is, the hypocrite's approach to giving. Now first of all, we learn from the hypocrite, "The Wrong Way to Give." Look at what Jesus says in verse 2. So, "When you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets." Now that expression, "sound a trumpet," there is no evidence in history or the New Testament that the Pharisees actually blew literal trumpets to broadcast their giving. Instead, Jesus is using this expression figuratively. A lot like we use the expression "tooting one's own horn." That's the idea. They gave to "toot their own horn."

Now Jesus says, notice, that they trumpeted their giving in two places in verse 2. First of all, "in the synagogues." Now, as we learned last time, there was a tithe tax for the poor. But that tax was to be supplemented by freewill or voluntary gifts for the poor. How did they give for the

poor? Well, one of the ways they gave toward the poor in the first century, the Jews often gave to the poor through their local synagogues. They would take their gifts to the synagogue, and then the leaders of the synagogue would administrate the distribution of those gifts to the poor. That was right, however, the Pharisees loved to give their gifts for the poor at the synagogue, but they loved to give them in a way that they would be noticed by others. What did that look like? Well, a couple of Jewish documents from around the time of Christ help us see that. One Jewish document, actually from the second century B.C., this would be a little over a hundred years before Christ, says that "Significant donations made to the synagogue were actually publicly announced when they gathered on the Sabbath." Imagine that. You know, my getting up and going, okay, I just want to say that so and so gave so much this week. That's what happened. Another Jewish source from the same time period says that "If the gift was large enough, not only was it publicly announced, but the donor would not sit with the congregation that week, he would sit on the platform with the rabbis, acknowledged for his generosity." And the Pharisees loved it when that happened. That's Jesus' point. They lived for that. They loved that kind of public recognition. They sounded a trumpet, as it were, before them in the synagogues by giving enough that they were publicly announced or even got to sit on the stage.

But notice they also sounded a trumpet before them "in the streets," verse 2 says. The Greek word describes small, alley-like streets, the narrow lanes where the poor lived and worked. So when the Pharisees gave in the streets, they were giving directly to the poor where they lived. Jesus' point here is that even when they gave their gifts directly to the poor, they did everything they could to draw attention to themselves, to be seen, to be noticed, to be admired. They made every effort to advertise their giving. Jesus says, "Listen, if you're My disciple, you are not to give like that." When you give, let me ask you a question in your own soul:

> "When you give either to the church or maybe you give directly to those in need, I hope you do, but when you do either of those, do you do it in a way that you want others to notice you and admire you? Do you try blatantly or subtly to draw attention to yourself? Do you want the one you are helping to know? Do you want others to see? Or do you really care what God sees?"

Jesus says, "Don't be like the hypocrites. Don't follow their practice. Don't sound a trumpet before you. Don't toot your own horn when you give to the church or when you give directly to those in need," (Summary paraphrase).

Next, in verse 2, we learn from the hypocrite "The Wrong Reason to Give." You will notice, verse 1 tells us, the fact that they wanted to be noticed. But verse 2 tells us why. Notice what it says, "so that they may be honored by men." I think it's ironic that they pretended to give, but they really wanted to receive. They wanted to receive honor. Now, as I pointed out last week, the Greek word for 'honored' in verse 2 is actually the word 'glorify.' In fact, every other time Matthew uses this word, it's translated glorify as in glorifying God. So, look at it again in verse 2, they gave the way they gave; they trumpeted their giving "that they may be honored (glorified) by men." Hypocrites pretend to promote God's glory, but they're actually promoting their own. They are idolaters who steal from God the glory that belongs to Him alone.

Now, as I read that, I just think that is such a devastating rebuke of the Pharisees' motives, and you probably do too. But then I want you to think with me, Jesus just as clearly knows your motives for what you do. He knew theirs, and He knows mine, and He knows yours. It's just as clear to Him. So we need to ask ourselves, when we give, "Whose glory are we really after? What is the reason we give?"

Thirdly, from the hypocrite's giving, we learn “The Wrong Reward to Seek,” the wrong reward to seek. Notice verse 2, “Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.” You see, Jesus is saying they wanted to be noticed and glorified by men. And guess what? They got it! They got it! In fact, in the first century, because of their fastidious keeping of the law and their relentless zeal in every spiritual activity, everybody in the first century thought the Pharisees were really, truly, deeply, profoundly spiritual. You know, we read the New Testament, and they are kind of a joke to us now (Right?) because how the reality of their hearts is presented. But that wasn't true in the first century. If you had opened a first century dictionary and looked up the word ‘spiritual,’ a picture of a Pharisee would have been next to it. That's how they were thought of; that's how they were considered. They were glorified by men, which was exactly what they wanted.

But Jesus says, notice verse 2, “Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.” That expression, “reward in full,” is actually from the business world of the first century. It means ‘to receive payment in full.’ Jesus' point is they've gotten the payment they're getting; there will be no future reward from God for those who give to be noticed and admired by men. Again, I think it's ironic. The Pharisees weren't giving, really, they were buying, and they got exactly what they paid for, the glory they wanted from people. Don't you love it when a text doesn't apply to any of us? No, this wasn't just a first century problem! In fact, Ken Hughes writes this, this is a searching statement. Listen to what he writes. He says, “I wonder what would happen to our great national charities if there were no celebrity benefits, or published subscriber lists, or bronze plaques, or rooms to be named for major donors, or pictures to be taken with crippled children.” It's a searching question. Christian, listen, “When you give, Jesus says don't be like the hypocrites, and don't give in a way to be noticed and glorified by the people around you,

because if you do that, then you're getting all the reward you're ever going to get right then, right then, that moment!" (Summary paraphrase). Don't expect anything from God in eternity, because to Him, it's like you never gave anything at all.

If you're here this morning, and you're not a disciple of Jesus Christ, and you know that, you don't pretend to be. Or, if you're here this morning, and you are a hypocrite, you are a pretender, you know that your heart is not like the facade you put on when you come to church; you know that's true. You are not the person you pretend to be. If either of those is true, let me say something to you that's very sobering for me to say, but it is true, "You better squeeze all the joy out of this life you can get, because let me tell you what Jesus is going to say to you someday. You don't have to guess. He tells us. If you don't repent of your sin, you don't believe in Jesus, He tells us exactly what He's going to say to you. Turn over to Matthew 25; Matthew 25, look at verse 31:

> "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep (true believers) on His right, and the goats (non-believers) on the left."

Now, this judgment is probably not the same judgment as the Great White Throne Judgment that's in Revelation 20; that happens at the end of the millennium. This judgment probably happens at the Second Coming of Christ, at the end of the Tribulation before the Millennium unfolds. Those who've survived the Tribulation will be judged in this judgment. But it's representative of what's going to happen at the other judgments to unbelievers. Notice what

happens. Go down to verse 41, “Then He will say to those on His left (unbelievers), ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones (those under God's curse and damnation), into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.’”

Friend, I hate to tell you, but Jesus says, “That's exactly what I'm going to say to you.” And then He goes on:

> “...for I was hungry, and you gave Me *nothing* to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; I was a stranger, and you didn't invite Me in; naked, and you didn't clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me. Then they themselves also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?’ Then He will answer them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these (who truly believe in Me), you didn't do it to Me.”

Now don't misunderstand, Jesus isn't saying you get into heaven by your good works. He's very clear about that. You get into heaven by being like the man in His story, the tax collector who beats his chest saying, “God, be merciful to me, the sinner.” But how you act and how you live betrays the reality of who you really are. That's what He's saying. And loving His people is the way you manifest that you have a true love for God, that your heart's been changed. Now watch verse 46, “These (unbelievers)will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

You know, it's popular in some circles in Christianity today to believe in what's called ‘Annihilationism,’ that unbelievers will simply go out of existence at the moment of their death. That's not what Jesus believed. Notice here He uses the same words to describe the reality for

both unbelievers and believers. “These (unbelievers) will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” However long your eternal life will exist is how long punishment will exist for those who are God's enemies. That's what Jesus taught. It's not me, that's Jesus. You can take it up with Him if you disagree. That's what He says.

And friend, if you're here without Christ, it's a sobering thing for me to say to you, but if you don't repent of your sins and believe in Jesus, in His life, death, and resurrection as your only hope of being right with your Creator, of being forgiven, Jesus says you are going to stand before Him, and He's going to say this to you, and this is going to be your eternal destiny. The hypocrite's approach to giving is to give in “The Wrong Way,” for “The Wrong Reason,” and for “The Wrong Reward.”

But next, back in our text, Jesus describes “His Disciples' Approach to Biblical Giving,” His disciples' approach to biblical giving. Notice He first of all explains “The Right Way to Give.” Verse 3, but unlike them, “But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.” Now, Jesus here is focusing on giving to the poor, but the principle applies to all of our giving, whether we are giving for missions or for the local church or for the poor; whether we're giving privately to individuals or whether we're giving to the church, what He says here goes for all of those situations. Now, first of all, notice what He's not teaching here. He's not teaching that it's wrong to plan our giving. That's clear because Jesus and His disciples in the Gospels planned their giving. Secondly, He's not saying that it's wrong to keep records of your giving. Some would say, “You just need to forget it, and you shouldn't even keep a record of it for your taxes or whatever.” He's not teaching that our giving must always, in every circumstance, be anonymous. We know that because there is giving that is praised in the New Testament and we know who gave. We know the women who supported Jesus by name,

who supported Jesus in His ministry. So it's not that all giving must always be anonymous in every way. That's not the point.

Look again at the right way for us to give, verse 3, “When you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.” Now this is obvious, but let me just remind you, notice what He doesn't say. He doesn't say, “When you give, don't let other people know.” He's already said that and that's kind of included, but His statement here goes even beyond that. He says, “Don't let one of your hands know what your other hand is doing.” Now that's a surprising statement because most of the time, our hands work together; they work in tandem. So what does He mean? When Jesus says, “Don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.” He's not talking about keeping our giving secret from others. Now, He's talking about keeping our giving secret even from ourselves in one sense. William Hendrickson writes:

> As much as possible, a person must keep his contribution a secret not only to others, but even to himself. That is, he should forget about it. Not only does Jesus forbid us from giving to be exalted in the eyes of others, He forbids us from giving to be exalted in our own eyes, even if nobody else ever knows.

You see, our flesh is so bad, that part of us that remains unredeemed is so bad that we can give secretly and become proud and self-congratulatory over the fact of that we gave, how much we gave, or even that we gave in secret. John Stott writes:

> As soon as the giving of a gift is decided and done, forget it. We are not to keep recalling it in order to gloat over it or to preen ourselves on how generous, disciplined, or more conscientious our giving may have been. Christian giving is to be marked by self-sacrifice and self-forgetfulness, not by self-congratulation.

Jesus says we must give without external promotion of ourselves to others, and we must give without internal promotion of ourselves within ourselves. And frankly, if you're in Christ, this is how you tend to be anyway. You know you don't deserve anything; you know everything is grace. You know that whatever good you do, it's produced in you by the Holy Spirit. And so, you just don't think like this most of the time. In fact, let me show you this. Jesus says, go over to Matthew 25 again, Jesus says that at the judgment, believers are going to be unaware that they actually did righteous things. Look at chapter 25, verse 34:

> "Then the King will say to those on His right (Now he's talking to believers and notice what he says to believers. He says,) 'I was hungry (verse 35), and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, you gave Me *something* to drink; I was a stranger, you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, you came to Me.' (Now watch verse 37,) Then the righteous will answer Him (This is at the judgment.), 'Lord, when did we (do that) see you hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You *something* to drink? (We don't remember doing that. When did we visit you?) And when did we see You a stranger, and invite you in, or naked, and clothe you?'...(verse 40) The king will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of (the least) these brothers of Mine, *even* the least of *them*, you did it to me.'"

Now, the point is that in doing it to one of His followers, we do it to Him, but there is a self-forgetfulness in the true believer's heart. When we do good things, we know it is not us, so we don't sort of congratulate ourselves and think we are so great. We know it's what God did anyway, and so we tend to forget about it, and at the judgment we are going, like, "When did we do that? I don't remember doing that." And that's how it ought to be.

So let me ask you, “When you give, do you give like Jesus says here?” When you give, Jesus says ,”Don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.” Don't even dwell on it yourself. Give it, do it for the Lord, and move on. And don't keep rehearsing and reminding yourself of how wonderful that was of you. That's the right way to give.

Jesus next explains “The Right Motive for Giving.” Look at verse 4, the right motive, “so that your giving will be in secret.” Now, there is a reason that matters. Remember what we just learned. It's not just that our giving must be in secret. You can give in secret and still be giving for the wrong motive. The point of giving in secret, that is the right motive, is that God sees you, that's the point. That's what we should want, because what we want most is His approval and His glory. Again, John Stott points out that there are only three motives for giving. Listen to what he writes, “Either we are seeking the praise of men, or we preserve our anonymity but are quietly congratulating ourselves, or we are desirous of the approval of our divine Father alone.” Let me reword that. Let me say it a different way, “We give either to exalt ourselves in the eyes of others, or to exalt ourselves in our own eyes, or to exalt God.” Those are the only three options.

Now, why does it matter? Because giving to the needy in secret, giving in secret, period, but giving to the needy in secret without self-promotion on the one hand to others, or self-satisfaction and sort of inwardly congratulating ourselves, giving in secret without that gives glory to God. Why? Because it draws attention away from us, and it focuses attention on God as the real provider of that person's needs. Think about it. They get a gift. They don't know who it's from. They have a need. Everybody knows they have that need, but they get a gift that is going to meet that need. Where does their mind go? Their mind's not going to go to, “Wow, that's a great person to give us that much money!” No, their mind's going to be to, “Wow, look at what

God did for us through somebody we don't even know!" You see, in giving like that, God is the hero, not us, because we're just the channel through which God expresses His goodness to others.

When you give, and I had to ask myself this question this week, so I'm going to let you share some of the pain, "When you give, is it solely for God's approval and glory?" Or let me ask it another way, "Would you still give if no one but God ever knew? Would you still give if it didn't make you feel good about yourself? Would you still give if there was no tax deduction?" The right motive behind legitimate Christian giving is seeking God's glory and God's approval; the Father's glory, the Father's approval, and it does gain His approval.

I want you to turn over to Philippians, chapter 4. There's a profound passage here in Philippians 4, as Paul rehearses the gift, actually the gifts, that the Philippians gave to him as a church. Notice Philippians 4, verse 15:

> You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me (Notice again, giving through the church, no church shared with me.) in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; for even in Thessalonica you sent a *gift* more than once for my needs. Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account. (Now, he's going to thank them for this most recent gift they have sent him with Epaphroditus. Notice what he says in verse 18.) But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you sent (Now watch the end of the verse. This is how God saw the gift of the Christians in Philippi. The gift which you sent was...), a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice ,well pleasing to God.

And that wasn't just true of their giving. Beloved, when we give in the ways we are learning, when we give in God's sight, it is, notice first of all, “a fragrant aroma.” Literally it is a smell of sweetness. It's a picture of the Old Testament burnt-offering sacrifice when the smoke was said to rise off that sacrifice and be a sweet smell in God's nostrils. That's what our gifts are. It's an acceptable sacrifice. Sacrifice is the common Old Testament term for sacrifices to God. And this sacrifice of a gift is “acceptable,” that is, it is approved by God. And then notice how verse 18 ends, I love this, it is “well-pleasing to God.” Our financial gifts please our God when we give in the right way, with the right motive, it is worship just like if you were in Old Testament times and you offered a sacrifice to God with the right spirit. It's just like that. This is so important to remember because let's be honest with ourselves, giving to the Lord can seem sterile, kind of detached from the rest of our worship. It doesn't always produce a sort of emotional response. So it can seem mechanical. It can seem, frankly, no different than giving to some secular organization like the American Heart Association or the American Cancer Society. But when we give through the church to support missionaries, those in need, the ministry of the church, it is entirely different. That's what Paul wants us to know. Christian giving is ultimately an act of personal worship–you and I, when we give, we give to God.

The first time Sheila gave our daughter, Lauren, some coins to give at church, not long after we came, actually, this had still been when we were at Grace in California. She gave her some money to give at church. I walked into our bedroom and there she was and she had those little coins in her hand, and she was standing on her tiptoes with her little body stretched out the full length that she could. She had this grimace on her face and her hand with that money was held high in the sky, and I said, “Honey, what are you doing?” She said, “Dad (You know that sort of exasperation.), Dad, I'm trying to give Jesus my money, but He won't take it.” True story! The

truth is, when we give to the Lord through His church, we give to Him just as truly as if we placed it in His hands. That's what Paul says to the Philippians. It's a sweet smell to Him; it's a sacrifice that He approves. It truly pleases Him.

Let's consider lastly, back in our text, Matthew, chapter 6, "The Father's Response to Biblical Giving," the Father's response. Verse 4, Jesus ends by saying, when you do that, when you give like my disciples should give, "your Father who sees *what is done* in secret will reward you." Do you realize that God sees in secret, that God sees everything? Hebrews 4:13, "And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." Nothing escapes the notice of our omniscient, omnipresent Father. Our Father sees everything, and He keeps a complete record in His omniscient mind. He never forgets anything He chooses not to forget. You know what that means? He sees when you give for the right reason as unto Him. He sees when you give to the poor for His approval and glory. I read it a moment ago in Matthew 25:34, "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'" By the way, that shows you don't get in because you earn your way in. He says, you "are blessed of My Father" and what you are getting "was prepared for you (before you ever existed) from the foundation of the world." You are getting grace. You are getting in because of grace, because of what Christ did.

But the evidence that you have a changed heart is what you do. He says, "I was hungry and you gave me something to eat." Don't you love that? He saw. He sees! When you make a meal for a family who's going through a hard time, when you give a gift card to somebody who doesn't have what they need to eat, when you make a meal for those who just have a loved one die in our church family, and you minister to them in that way, most of the people in our church don't

know. There might be a handful of people who see, but God always sees! That's Jesus' point. He always sees. He says, “I was thirsty, and you gave Me *something* to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in,” a traveling Christian, and you opened your home and had Me there. I was “naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me.” You make a hospital visit; Jesus sees. “I was in prison, and you came to Me.” Listen, beloved, He sees! And Jesus says, “and the Father will reward you.”

How does God reward us for our faithfulness here, for our giving that's in keeping with what Jesus commands here? There are two ways we're rewarded. Number one, with “Temporal provision and spiritual blessings now,” temporal provision and spiritual blessings now. Turn over to 2 Corinthians. I told you that 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, is one of the passages about giving in the New Testament. Well, right in the middle of this passage, 2 Corinthians 9, verse 10, he's just praised them for their sacrificial, cheerful giving to the needs of others, and notice what he says is going to happen in verse 10, “Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing.” Now, most commentators agree that the first half of this verse is talking about temporal provision. This isn't a promise of prosperity; this isn't the prosperity gospel. He's just saying that when you are generous with your resources and you care for others, God is going to care for your needs. He may take us through lean times; He usually does, all of us at some point in life. But over time, He's going to provide for our needs as we are faithful to use the resources that He's given us to help others.

I was telling someone just this week, I'm the youngest of ten children, and my father was a music director in a small Southern Baptist church most of my life. Well, being a music director in a small Southern Baptist church and having ten children, those don't go together real well in the real world. But I cannot tell you how many times I heard my dad quote David, and he said

this, “I was young and now I am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his seed (descendants) begging bread.” Oh yes, there can be lean times, we may not have everything we want, but God provides for His own. And that's what He's promising here, “Use your resources the way I've commanded you to, and I'm going to temporally provide for your needs,”

(Paraphrase). But notice, there's also spiritual blessings now. “And (In verse 10, I will.) increase the harvest of your righteousness,” (I'm going to use your obedience to what I've commanded to continue to grow you, and you're going to have a harvest of righteousness as you do what I've commanded you to do.) So, that's the reward now.

But there's also, secondly, “A future reward at the judgment.” This is, I think, what Jesus is primarily focusing on in our text. He's talking about what happens at the judgment. The Father's going to reward you then. “What will our future reward be?” It's a question I get often, “What is it going to be?” Well, I think there's a clear implication of what it's going to be in Matthew 25; turn there with me again, Matthew 25. In another parable in this chapter, Jesus describes a master who leaves slaves and goes away, and he comes back and he finds slaves who have been faithful while He's gone. It's describing Him, obviously. And in what He promises these faithful slaves, we have, I think, a clear indication of what our future reward will be. First of all, our future reward will be “A greater capacity for service in eternity.” Look at Matthew 25, verse 21, the master says to this faithful slave, “Well done, good and faithful slave. (Watch this.) You were faithful (While I was gone.) with a few things, (and now) I will (am going) to put you in charge of many things.” He's talking about the capacity for serving Him in eternity. Faithful in this life means a greater opportunity to serve Him. Not for our own aggrandizement, not for our own glory, but the privilege of serving Him in even a greater way.

But there's a second part of that eternal reward, that reward of the judgment that's just mind-blowing. It is “Jesus' public approval and commendation.” Look again at verse 21 of Matthew 25, “His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave.’” You know, we just read past that sometimes. But Christian, if you love Jesus Christ, if you're His follower, if you want to please Him, can you just imagine for a moment what it will be like someday to stand before Him at the judgment and for Him to say about your life, “Well done, you were good, you were a faithful slave.”?

And then notice, He says in verse 25, “Enter into the joy of your master.” enjoy My joy forever! Christian, think about this, you can choose between the praise of people now or the praise of Jesus then. 1 Corinthians 4, verse 5, talking about this judgment, says, “Therefore, do not go on passing judgment before the time, *but wait* until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of *men's* hearts.” Now, when you read that expression, all of us who know our own hearts kind of wince, “Uh-oh, this isn't good. He's going to bring to light things hidden in the darkness and He's going to disclose the motives of men's hearts.” Can that be bad? Of course it can be bad. But in context, it's not bad; He's talking about good things. He's talking about things you have done that nobody else knew that were good. He's talking about good motives for which you serve the Lord. And He is going to bring it to light. And what is He going to do? 1 Corinthians 4, verse 5, “then each man's praise will come to him from God.” Beloved, that's a reward worth living for!

Let's pray together. Father, thank You for the piercing clarity of our Lord's words. Lord, may we who know and love Him, may we live before Your face. May we live with an eye to Your glory and not our own. May we do everything we do not to be exalted by people, but to hear, “Well done, good and faithful slave.”

And Father, I pray for those here this morning who are not in Christ. Maybe they know that, or maybe they are hypocrites; they have a great facade, but they know that their hearts are nothing like the person they portray. Father, strip that all away through Your Word this morning, and bring them face to face with what they will actually hear at the judgment, that You see it all, and they will get exactly what they deserve if they don't repent and believe in Your Son. And Lord, may they do that today. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.