

On Giving and Praying

by Timothy Tow

The sermon emphasizes the importance of giving and praying in a humble and sincere manner, avoiding self-glory and seeking God's reward.

Scripture: Matthew 6:1-7, Galatians 2:10, James 4:2

Topics: "Giving To God", "Effective Prayer"

Description

Timothy Tow preaches on the importance of genuine and humble service to God, contrasting the Pharisees' showy acts of alms-giving with the true spirit of giving in secret to receive God's reward. He emphasizes the need for sincerity in giving and praying, highlighting the dangers of seeking recognition and applause from others. Through examples of generous acts and prayerful petitions, he encourages the congregation to trust in God's provision and guidance, rather than relying on human efforts or vain repetitions.

Transcript

Text: Matt 6:1-8

In Matthew Chapter 5 our Lord refutes the Pharisees' legalistic and twisted interpretations of the Law of Moses. As we enter Chapter 6 He corrects and purifies our motives in the service of God, in alms-giving and in praying.

"Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly." How did the Pharisees show off in alms-giving (which is giving money to the poor or food to feed them)? By way of illustration let me tell you the story of two Singapore tycoons of pre-War years. One was Tan Kah Kee (kah kee in Malay means feet) and he was the Rubber King and manufacturer of rubber shoes, the Bata shoes of those days. The other was Aw Boon Haw (and haw in Chinese is Tiger). He was the manufacturer of Tiger Balm which is well-known to this day.

At Chinese New Year, the two philanthropists would vie with each other in giving alms to the aged. Ten kilos of rice and an angpow of \$50. By this they advertise their goods, but according to the world they were

applauded. When we give to charity we must not show off likewise.

Life Church , in obedience to our Lord's commands to "remember the poor" (Gal 2:16), has sent ten containers of surplus clothings, sardines, biscuits, baked beans, etc to Cambodia . This easily cost \$100,000. The money came from the Church, fellowships, NBCs and individuals, all given anonymously. We received from our members not only the containers but also scholarships for FEBC students and FEBC's Dining Club. You who have given in the humble spirit of Christ, has not the Lord blessed you?

From giving alms, let us learn about giving God. Some churches have inherited an erroneous tradition. The Chinese way of establishing confidence in the Church management is to report every item of donation. In so doing the Church would publish their names on the notice board beginning with the highest giver, right down to the lowest. This letting the left hand know what the right hand doeth (Matt 6:3) "takes away the reward."

I know of a church of another nationality which announces from the pulpit every Lord's Day the envelopes received and the amount given by so and so. But this is not our practice.

To create confidence in members for the Management, we have half-a-dozen who count the offerings which are counter-signed with the Treasurer. We have also a Treasurer who is not only efficient but also trustworthy. The Pastor who is the head of the Church must also be reputed to be above board and one who spends church funds with meticulous care.

The way we weekly report the receipt of funds is well acceptable to the congregation for the left hand does not know what the right hand doeth. Funds coming from outside are revealed so that members might realise these are bounties from the Lord. The back page of our Weekly is also filled with testimonies of grateful givers. This is better than the Pastor's exhortation.

On Praying

The second part of our sermon is on praying. One lesson we can learn from our Lord's rebuke is for those who lead in public prayer. Prayer is not making a speech, or using many phrases that are redundant. "But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking" (v.7). Our prayer is not in the indicative mood, i.e., saying many things about our God, a sort of verbal padding. It should be in the optative mood, in direct address, in earnest supplication to our Lord. This is what we really need in an age of prayerlessness. We are of the Laodicean Church , lukewarm, because we are increased with goods and have need of nothing, when indeed we are spiritually wretched, miserable and blind. We are far from the spirit of prayer of a Church in dire need. During the War we were taking refuge in our Uncle's country house at Ah Hood Road in what is Toa Payoh today. When the shells fell on our compound scoring a direct hit on a shelter occupied by his friend, we know how to cry out (in the optative mood) to God.

In our private prayers, neither should we show off ourselves. "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly" (v.6).

When we are in the mood of prayer, the Father will reveal to us the way of meeting all our needs. We know how to approach Him, "for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him" (v.8).

When I returned from the States to pastor Life Church English Service we had 10 persons crowded into three rooms in my Tiong Bahru flat. We were six in our own family. I was desperate for a bigger flat. I went to see my former ACS teacher who was now a politician and I thought he could help me. His reply was there were 50,000 applications in those post-War years for SIT (HDB) flat. He could not help me.

This cast me at the feet of the Saviour. As I prayed to God, I felt encouraged to go right up to the top of SIT, the then Housing Board. Tremblingly, I phoned the manager. I told him who I was, a minister of the Gospel just returned from America and I needed a bigger flat for my growing family. To which he replied, "Come and see me tomorrow." I went to his office at 2.00 pm but with the crowds on, every one seeking a flat, I waited until 4.30 pm . Meanwhile I prayed as never before. When I was the last to be called, the manager, Mr Carter, kept pushing his pen which kept me in abeyance. Then turning his eyes on me, he said, "Come next week for your keys." "Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him."

But many of us run here and there in futility. We put all attention, e.g., on our children. At Primary 1 we give them tuition in Chinese, in Mathematics, in Music, etc. But we never ask the Lord to help them. We give tuition to our granddaughter but we have found the greater joy of committing her to the Lord in prayer. She believes in the Lord and is blessed with success.

"Yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss" (Jas 4:2-3). Let us learn the right way to pray and ask Him in time of need. For vain is the help of man.

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