**The Sermon on the Mount (Part 10) + Weekly Devotion + 10.2.2024**

**Read Matthew 6:1-4**

*“But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing” (Matthew 6:3)*

Jesus disapproves of doing good works in order to make ourselves look good. Unfortunately, we see this happen all the time. Politicians try their best to say and do all the right things in order to get votes (while simultaneously slandering their opponents in order to make them look bad). Celebrities and (sadly) leaders in the Church do similar things. Charismatic speakers gain followers by saying what people want to hear, using Jesus and Christianity to manipulate their hearers.

Christ teaches His disciples to live selflessly, compassionately, and humbly. The context here is almsgiving specifically (see Matthew 6:2) though Jesus’ words can be applied more broadly. When giving to the needy, Jesus teaches us to emulate Him. He gave His life for us, the needy, without making a big show of it.

Our Lord didn’t teach and do miracles in order to be praised. He didn’t make the greatest sacrifice the world has ever known in order to make a name for Himself. He already bears the name above all names, the name of God Himself. He doesn’t need our praise – already the countless host (armies) of heaven and creation itself praise Him endlessly. Instead, Jesus humbled Himself by taking on the form of a servant, becoming obedient unto the most shameful and agonizing death because He loves us.

Those who do good works and give to the needy in order to be praised by people receive their “reward” here and now. But we who give as Christ gives receive a “reward” which endures forever. But what exactly is this reward? The word “reward” in this passage means “pay for [a] service” like the pay or wage given to a worker (see Matthew 20:1-16, especially verse 8). Jesus uses the word “reward” 6 times in the Sermon on the Mount alone (Matthew 5:12, 46; 6:1, 2, 5, 16).

As Lutheran Christians, we get uncomfortable talking about rewards. It makes us uncomfortable because we’re afraid of falling into false teachings like salvation by works. But Jesus isn’t afraid to talk about “rewards” and neither should we; we just need to know what Jesus is talking about.

Our reward is in heaven; it’s eternal life (Romans 6:23), the crown of righteousness (2 Timothy 4:8); the crown of life (James 1:12), and more. Our reward is simply to be with God in the presence of Christ, the one who is Life itself. God gives us this “reward” because of Christ’s merits, not ours. He gives us our reward because Christ gave everything for us, the needy. Our reward in heaven is a pure gift. Even so, God sees our good works and delights in them. He sees us give to the needy and He can’t help but see Christ in us. For when we give to the needy, we reflect what Christ has done for us.

Prayer: Loving Father, may our giving to the needy always give You glory. Amen.