



## *Giving to the Needy* - Matthew 6:1-4

We all like to be noticed or appreciated for what we do. Knowing that people think well of us can be a boost to our self-esteem. Yet, when it comes to our discipleship, what we do in service to others is often best kept a private matter between us and God.

When online giving for churches was just starting, many regular givers wondered what people would think of them if they did not put something into the offering plate as it was passed. Thrivent even went so far as to provide a slip of paper with information about online giving to provide people who used this service with at least something to put into the offering plate.

Jesus is direct in warning us not to perform our acts of righteousness for the benefit of others. Our goal in service to others, in giving to support the needy, is not to be seen doing so, but to simply do so for their benefit alone. Rather than being done in public in order to be seen and admired, Jesus recommends that we not even let our left hand know what our right hand is doing. This implies that we are not to even keep track of what we have done for others ourselves. Simply respond to the needs of others when they present themselves in the moment, and then move on to the next moment for further service in our various vocational callings rather than pausing to pat ourselves on the back.

Later in his Gospel, Matthew records the teachings of Jesus on the final judgment in which faithful Christians respond to God's praise for their care for others saying, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?" (Matt. 25:37b-39) This is the net result when out of the overflow of the love of God that we experience, we serve those in need without even keeping track for ourselves what we have been doing.

## *Thoughts for Reflection*

How does serving those in need out of the overflow of God's love become more freeing than out of a sense of obligation or to make yourself look good?

1 "Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

2 "Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 3 But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.