

Sermon Series: "Christian Life-skills for every age"—Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN—7/1/2001

Title: "Avoiding Self-righteousness"

Text: Matthew 6: 1-18

Introduction: **ILLUS. Daddy's Girl**

Theme: When our Christian sense of worth comes from a confidence born in Christ and not from fleshly attempts of self-esteem, we will avoid spiritually dangerous self-righteousness and receive our full reward.

Who is your audience? (Print/read vss. 1-4)

- Often we are playing to the crowds with our Christian service
 1. Jesus warns against "good works in public to cause people to affix their attention on you."
 2. **ILLUS.: BEING A HYPOCRITE ALMOST TILL IT KILLS YOU**
 3. Because then we are a "hypocrite"—under judgement—**THREE TIMES MENTIONS IT** (vs. 2,5,16)
- Many times we are pandering our own ego's self-righteousness
 1. We will find our church and faith life less and less fulfilling because God has not blessed it
 2. Our joy and spiritual life will eventually dry up
- Developing and disciplining yourself to have an audience of **ONE**
 1. Done in secret and rewarded in secret--no one can diminish the abundant blessing God is giving
 - a. Give your contributions privately. Your Father sees what you do in private. He will reward you. (vs. 4)
 2. Coming to a deeper awareness of what God's grace means for you -- drives your unconditional giving toward others

What are your expectations? (Print/read vss 5-15)

- The temptation to settle for temporal/earthbound goals in practicing our Christianity
 1. To gain material benefit for ourselves
 2. To manipulate and control others
- Choosing the right "reward" to measure our efforts
 1. Jesus warns us that if we settle for temporal benefits, "we already got what we are going to get"
 - a. **ILLUS.: WEB SITE RATING**
 2. When we don't settle for the least praise we get from people, Jesus delivers the best God can give us
 - a. Understanding where your true treasure is and how it cannot be impacted the tides of change in our life
 - b. You have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. Christ is your life. When he appears, then you, too, will appear with him in glory. Col. 3:3-4
 - c. Jesus tells us to boldly pray that God's will be done, our need be filled, our forgiveness and mercy be complete, and our deliverance be secured

How are you going about your Christian piety? (Print/read vss. 16-18)

- Evaluate the method
 1. **Stealth piety** When you give to the poor, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. (vs. 3)
 - a. Like a military aircraft designed to go undetected, our piety must be intentionally made invisible or it won't be
 - b. Making it your goal that no one sees/knows who did it
 - c. **ILLUS.: THE YEARLY SALVATION ARMY PHILANTHROPIC GIFT**
 2. **Joyful piety**
 - a. "When you fast, stop looking sad like hypocrites. They put on sad faces to make it obvious that they're fasting. . . . When you fast, wash your face and comb your hair. Then your fasting won't be obvious." (vs. 17, 18)
 - b. Reflecting the joy of having received God's mercy and the joy of being used as God's tool of mercy
- Expect the resource
 1. Freed up in Christ to expect a lot more from God
 - a. In our attitude (Glory belongs to God, whose power is at work in us. By this power he can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. Ephesians 3: 20)
 - b. In our availability ("Bring one-tenth of your income into the storehouse so that there may be food in my house. Test me in this way," says the LORD of Armies. "See if I won't open the windows of heaven for you and flood you with blessings." Malachi 3:10)
 2. Freed up by Christ to expect a lot more from myself
 - a. **ILLUS.: OUT OF GAS**
 - b. "I can do everything through Christ who strengthens me." Philip. 4:13

Daddy's Girl

My husband admired our 6-year-old daughter while she was dancing around the kitchen. Finally, he stopped her with a hug. "You know," he said, looking Amy in the eyes, "you're cute--just like your father." Amy was silent for a moment. "You mean my heavenly father or you?"

Being a Hypocrite Almost till it Kills You

Finding himself desperately in need of money, a man went to the city zoo, hoping to get a job feeding the animals. Although no such opportunity was available, the manager, seeing the size and the strength of the applicant, suddenly got an idea. "You know," he said, "there are few creatures who attract attention like a gorilla. Unfortunately, ours died yesterday. If we got you a special fur suit, would you be willing to imitate him for a few days for pay?" The hungry man agreed to try. He was quite successful as he beat his chest, bellowed, and shook the bars of his cage – much to the amusement of visitors who said they had never seen a gorilla with such intelligence. One day, while swinging on his trapeze, he accidentally lost his grip and landed in the lion's den. The huge beast gave a ferocious roar. Backing away, the imposter realized he couldn't cry for assistance without revealing that he was fake. He retreated, hoping to crawl back over the fence into his own cage. The lion, however, followed him. Finally, in desperation he yelled, "HELP!" Immediately the lion said under his breath, "Shut up, stupid! You'll get us both fired!"

Web site rating

One web site allows us to measure ourselves by the opinions of others. You can find out how attractive you are by sending your picture to AmIHotOrNot.com. The Internet audience will rate you on a scale of 1 to 10. If this is too intimidating, you can simply choose to rate other people. Since opening on October 9, 2000, 163,000 people have submitted photos and the site gets 10 million page views a day.

when he is alone." In other words, it's what someone does when no one's watching that indicates the true person.

Out of Gas

One New Year's Day, in the Tournament of Roses parade, a beautiful float suddenly sputtered and quit. It was out of gas. The whole parade was held up until someone could get a can of gas. The amusing thing was this float represented the Standard Oil Company. With its vast oil resources, its truck was out of gas. Often, Christians neglect their spiritual maintenance, and though they are "clothed with power" (Luke 24:49) find themselves out of gas.

Matthew 6:1-18

"Be careful not to do your good works in public in order to attract attention. If you do, your Father in heaven will not reward you. ²So when you give to the poor, don't announce it with trumpet fanfare. This is what hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets in order to be praised by people. I can guarantee this truth: That will be their only reward.

³When you give to the poor, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. ⁴Give your contributions privately. Your Father sees what you do in private. He will reward you.

⁵"When you pray, don't be like hypocrites. They like to stand in synagogues and on street corners to pray so that everyone can see them. I can guarantee this truth: That will be their only reward. ⁶When you pray, go to your room and close the door. Pray privately to your Father who is with you. Your Father sees what you do in private. He will reward you.

⁷"When you pray, don't ramble like heathens who think they'll be heard if they talk a lot. ⁸Don't be like them. Your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹"This is how you should pray: Our Father in heaven, let your name be kept holy.

¹⁰Let your kingdom come. Let your will be done on earth as it is done in heaven. ¹¹Give us our daily bread today.

¹²Forgive us as we forgive others. ¹³Don't allow us to be tempted. Instead, rescue us from the evil one. ¹⁴"If you forgive the failures of others, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵But if you don't forgive others, your Father will not forgive your failures.

¹⁶"When you fast, stop looking sad like hypocrites. They put on sad faces to make it obvious that they're fasting. I can guarantee this truth: That will be their only reward. ¹⁷When you fast, wash your face and comb your hair. ¹⁸Then your fasting won't be obvious. Instead, it will be obvious to your Father who is with you in private. Your Father sees what you do in private. He will reward you. [GW]