



Beware

“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.”(Matthew 6:1)

There are few things more annoying or despised by people than someone who loves to let people know how much he loves himself. Have you ever been in a meeting and listened to a boss who was his own biggest fan? Have you ever had to endure that pretentious person who, in a gathering for a special occasion and when asked to speak, made it all about himself? Have you ever been in a meeting where a speaker tried to impress his audience with his speaking ability or with how much he knew (or at least thought he knew) and/or how much he loved the sound of his own voice? Perhaps the more important question we need to ask is, are we that person?

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus warns us against being that person (Matthew 5-7; especially, 6:1-18). The Sermon on the Mount is not a conversion sermon on how to become a Christian. It is a sermon on living as a citizen under His rule (kingdom). In other words, if you are a citizen of the kingdom (living under the rule of Christ) this is HOW you live! The Sermon on the Mount is not a set of conditions or a negotiation or a series of suggestions. To the contrary, Jesus is telling us how the very nature of those who ARE living under His rule expresses itself.

Specifically, in Matthew 6:1-18, Jesus warns us about making a show of our religion in public. He uses the acts of giving to the poor (vv. 2-4), praying (vv. 5-14) and fasting (16-18) as religious practices of the day by which the world measured the piety (righteousness) of a person. As one commentator writes on Matthew 6:1: *“He warns his hearers against the ostentatious devotion sometimes to be found in the religion of His day, as of ours; and equally continued on the next page*

