

# **Sadly – Giving can be Non-Genuine**

*Matthew 6:2*

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*When you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. (Matthew 6:2)*

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I'm sure everyone knows that we live in a time when money is very much the language of most influence and acceptance in this days is green and generally spoken by all peoples. Money is a given need and is a priority in the lives of many, if not all people today. We're all chasing after the ability to manage our lives, our homes and our the needs of our families, and that is surely a very difficult purpose in many, many lives. In the lives of believers we see the addition of the Biblical necessity of giving to whatever church fellowship we are a part of both for the support of the fellowship as well and as the act of obedience to the command of God. In many case this act of giving is willing and even cheerful.

But there are other requirements for giving in our words. I could speak of taxes, or instance. Thankfully, most often that "giving" starts with a deduction at work, and then finishes, combined with either regret or outright resentment come each April 15<sup>th</sup>, although I have to admit that when the time come I am looking for the return that shows itself at the end of the process of doing my taxes. Jesus actually mention this for of giving during His walk and teaching. In Matthew 22:21 He speaks, in the face of complaints and resentment against the taxation requirements of the government. You'll remember that the Scribes and Pharisees were seeking to catch Jesus in what they considered a contradiction with what they vs. He was teaching. Christ, in response, asked them to show Him a coin and, using that coin, He asked whose picture was on it and then He settled the issue:

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*They said to Him, "Caesar's." And He said to them, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."*

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And so, we can recognize that there are, indeed, other necessities for our giving that exist in daily life. We have the need of rendering our taxes. And, as we have noted, for believers, there is the need to be regularly giving to our church and, perhaps to other entities that serve the Lord and for which God directs us to give.

But that does not exhaust our responsibilities to give, but there is one matter we need to discuss further. That is, just who (or what) are these additions targets for our giving? One thing we need to be thinking about is the fact that Jesus NEVER directed us be giving to groups (or individuals) that are seeking to serve us personally in any way.

So many, today, are concerned with “ministries” are mostly concerned with what what they (the particular ministry/ministry) can do for them. They are concerned, largely, with healing and other such matters. Jesus NEVER sought any contribution for the healings that He performed. It is certainly true that He had supporters who provided for Him, fed Him, etc. But there were NEVER conditions for what He would do for them.

The Scribes and Pharisees did a lot of money kinds of things as well. It was mostly the requiring of monetary contribution to secure the “blessing” of God and the favor of their participation in the matters of the Temple. It is interesting that there are religious groups today that walk much the same road. They require a gift before the one in view can reap any blessing or positive action on the part of the leader/priest.

Once again, there are many, many avenues for giving in the world (not necessarily the secular world) today. But it is interesting to think, for a moment, about what Jesus told us ought to be a part of our giving strategy. Of course, we must be supporting our local fellowship, and there is nothing wrong with supporting missionary work, etc. But one of the things Jesus told us be sure of is laid out for us in the verse we are considering.

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Jesus says a couple of important things for us to know and to keep in mind here:

1. First, we’ll note that He did NOT say, “If you give to the poor...”, but rather He said “When you give to the poor...”. The implication is that such giving is both a necessity and/or a given in the lives of believers. It seems that Jesus more or less expected that such giving would be present in the lives of those to whom He was speaking.
2. Second, you’ll notice that He was NOT speaking about giving to any “religious” target. This is not today that we ought not be giving to such group/organizations. Rather, the idea is that we ought to be sure that we are including what He does speak of.
3. Following the above, we ought to see that there ought to be some inclusion in our giving, at least in part, should have as a recipient, what Jesus refers to as the “poor”. The fact here is that the word refers, not to those income is less than a given norm' but rather, it refers to those who are needy, not have the basics of living.
4. Fourth, we should note also, that He speaks of not doing this giving in a way that is able to be seen by those around us, or worse, in a public fashion. This is not to say that we ought not to give to public charities that serve the poor in our greater social

context. Rather, we are not to do in any fashion that makes sure that the people of that circle are aware that we have done so. We must not do so with our names attached to it.

5. Several of those whom I read even suggested that this (number 4) would speak of giving so that we can take it off our taxes. I am not certain this is not an unnecessary extreme; in fact it seems to me that it is.
6. Sixthly, we should try to be sure that our giving does not follow, in any fashion, that of those who are seeking to be seen. The implication here is that our giving ought to be done with surety that it is being done privately and even secretly. While that is certainly a harsh thing, one that many will not be quickly grasped by those who have abundant means and who, often love to have their names attached to what they give. No big parties or public celebration of what is given.
7. This would also include being "...honored by men..." As Jesus says.
8. Eighth, we should note the idea that the final part of the verse tells us that there can be a condition, of course, involving the truth as Jesus says, where the "reward" for the giving (with the implication being that this reward is both seen in God's eyes and comes from God) is "full", or that they have, by getting praise from men, sounding the trumpet, comprises the whole "reward". They'll see none from God.
9. We should note also that there is the concept that these things (giving) can be done in a hypocritical way with the result that they are entirely human, from the giving action to the way they are viewed and received by God.

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Giving to the poor literally means any act of mercy, but it came to mean more specifically the giving of money or goods to the needy. Jesus did not say "if" but "when" concerning our giving—in other words, He expects us to do so. But just as sympathy for the needy does not help them unless something is actually done toward their need, so giving money provides us no spiritual blessing unless done from the heart.

Those who, like the Pharisees, give to impress others with their piety and generosity will receive no further reward. When we give with this false motive, we receive back only what people can give; we thereby forfeit God's blessings.

Many times, of course, the pretense people use to draw attention to or make an impression with their giving is not so obvious. They know, especially if they

profess to follow Christ, that other Christians will resent ostentatiousness. So they seek to make their giving “accidentally” noticed. But any strategy designed to draw attention is still a basic form of trumpet-blowing hypocrisy, which can appear in various forms. Whenever we make a point of doing our giving publicly to be noticed, rather than doing it privately simply for God’s reward, we behave more like the hypocrites of Jesus’ day, not like His children.

## *Ask Yourself*

What are some of the ways that giving can be done for personal recognition, even within the decorum of outward humility? How does one guard against this need for acknowledgment? What are we forgetting when we’re tempted to crave the credit for every dollar we share with others?

Just for closures’ sake, our world and the people in that world view any kind of giving as a good thing. Most would never consider, let alone accept or recognize this truth, that there are some kinds and some circumstances in which giving is far less that “good” giving, in fact it can be seen to be hypocritical, and void of any real benefit to the giver.

The common reaction to such giving is “...at least they gave something” or the like. But, with the exception of putting money in the hands of others, there is no real positive conclusion to be reached. As far as our Lord is concerned, and as Jesus proclaimed, we “have our reward”. Surely, all of us, as believers, are looking to so all, even our giving as service to our God. One reason we do so is that He blesses those who serve Him rightly. It is not so much selfishness as it is submission to the way in which He desires His children to accomplish and do what it is they are doing in His Name.

This is not to say that there is no value to giving, but we must not do it in any part of the Lord has taught against here. Rather, we see that there is a way in which God has commanded. We ought to do it in that fashion, and the fashion in which God has expressed. It is then, and only then that we can say that we have truly served the Lord.