

July 10, 2016



*"Blessed are the poor in spirit...  
Blessed are those who mourn...  
Blessed are the meek...  
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness...  
Blessed are the merciful...  
Blessed are the pure in heart...  
Blessed are the peacemakers...  
Blessed are those who are persecuted..."*

Matthew 5:3-12

*"You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world."*

Matthew 5:13-16

*"For I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven."*

Matthew 5:20-48

When I have been broken by the reality of my own sin, when I have surrendered myself completely to God's saving grace, then God, my loving Father, begins to transform me through his Spirit and by the power of his Son. As one who is being transformed from the inside out my attitudes will be changed and through those changes my actions will also change.

One of the changes in attitude that will mark my life as a surrendered believer will be toward God's expectations for my behavior. Jesus uses the examples of the laws concerning murder, adultery, divorce, oaths and vengeance as examples of this transformation in attitude. As one who loves others as completely as God does my attitudes will be changed to mirror my Father's.

In the same way God's transformation will change my attitudes towards *"acts of righteousness"*. To demonstrate this change of attitude demonstrated in action Jesus refers to three *"acts of righteousness"*: giving, prayer, and fasting. In each of these examples the Master focuses not so much on the act as on the motive for the act. So, when I give to the needs of others what is my motivation, when I pray what is my motivation, and when I fast what is my motivation.

If I am doing *"acts of righteousness"* before men, their approval, fleeting at best, will be my full reward. We tend to think that Jesus is referring our tendency to parade our righteousness before others as the trap here. I have become convinced that there may well be a broader issue at work with our *"acts of righteousness"*. Too often we measure someone's righteousness by the outward trappings that we believe go with a faithful and righteous life. So we measure our own

righteousness, and too often, the righteousness of others by our own prescribed "*acts of righteousness*".

Jesus, I think, wants us to understand that our "*acts of righteousness*" are between us and our Father. Whether we are discussing giving, or prayer, or fasting, or worship, or service, or whatever; the measure of our righteousness exists only between us and the Father. He alone knows my heart and he alone can measure my righteousness.

So, when I pray, my conversation is with him. When I worship, my worship is to him. When I give, I am giving to please him. If I seek only to meet the standards and expectations of the people around me then their approval is all I will receive. Jesus wants me to live for God's approval. Pleasing him is, after all, the only thing that really matters.

Ultimately the challenge for the transformed is to decide what really matters. The world will teach me that worldly things matter more than anything else. The world wants me to accept that the accumulation of worldly treasures including the approval of men is all I need pursue. God, my loving Father, wants me to understand that eternal treasures are the only thing I should pursue and his approval is all I need ever seek.