



## “Watch Me”

The Pursuit for Limelight

**Text:** Matthew 6:16-18 | | Ps. Reuel Ramos

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In our passage, Jesus addressed the hypocritical practice of fasting for the sake of public recognition. He contrasts this with genuine fasting, which is done in secret before God. Jesus underscores that true spiritual discipline is not about outward appearances but about inward motives. While Jesus does not condemn fasting itself, he criticizes the motivation behind the hypocrites' action. They were more concerned with their status and reputation than with genuine worship. This highlights a common contemporary problem:

*the danger of performing religious acts for the wrong reasons.*

We can observe a similar tendency today, where individuals may participate in church activities or serve in ministries to impress others or fulfill societal expectations. Such outward displays of religiosity can mask a lack of genuine faith and devotion.

It is crucial to examine our own hearts and motives. We must strive to serve God with purity and sincerity, not for the praise of others but for the glory of God alone. To avoid falling into the trap of hypocrisy, we must cultivate a genuine relationship with God and seek to live a life that reflects His love and truth.

## ● Live for an Audience of One●

To overcome hypocrisy in the eyes of God, we must ask ourselves: *"For whom are we living?" "Are we driven by the expectations of others, our own desires, or the will of God?"*

As Christ's disciples, we are called to prioritize pleasing our Savior above all else. Jesus' condemnation of the scribes and Pharisees highlights their misguided motivations. They were more concerned with the applause of men than living for God. Their actions were driven by selfish desires and a yearning to satisfy their egos.

To live with consistency, honesty, and integrity, we must live our lives for an audience of One: **Jesus Christ**. This means that in everything we say and do, we must remember that God is watching and that we are accountable to Him. Jesus emphasized this principle in Matthew 6:4, 6, and 18, where He instructs us to give, pray, and fast in secret. While these actions may sometimes be public, the true focus should be on pleasing God, not seeking human approval.

When Jesus said, *"And your Father who sees in secret will reward you,"* He is emphasizing that our ultimate motivation should be to honor and please the Lord. God sees our hearts and intentions, and He values sincerity over outward appearances. As Paul reminds us in Galatians 2:20 and 1 Corinthians 10:31, we should live our lives for the glory of God in everything we do.

## ● Guard Against False Spirituality●

While we are rightly cautious about the rampant false teachings in the world today, we must also be vigilant against the subtle dangers of false religiosity or spirituality within the Church. This requires self-

examination and discernment. As Ps. Edmund Chan points out, there are two unhealthy extremes in the contemporary Church regarding spiritual disciplines like giving, praying, and fasting. On one hand, many Christians neglect these practices altogether. On the other hand, some engage in them but are tempted by pride and self-righteousness. The scribes and Pharisees exemplified this flawed approach. Their religious activities were driven by a desire for recognition and self-promotion. They assessed their spiritual worth based on their own standards, leading to feelings of superiority and judgmentalism. If we are not careful, we can fall into similar traps. We may develop feelings of superiority toward those who do not engage in certain spiritual disciplines.

J.C. Ryle warns against "formal religion," which is characterized by outward religious practices without corresponding inward transformation. Such mindset can lead to legalism, the belief that salvation can be earned through good works. Legalists often focus on external performance rather than internal transformation.

True spirituality is not about mere religious rituals or self-righteousness. It is about a genuine relationship with God characterized by love, humility, and obedience. While discipline and routine can be helpful, they should not be the primary focus. Let us guard against the dangers of false religiosity and seek to cultivate a genuine and authentic relationship with God.

#### ● Hold Fast to God's Reward●

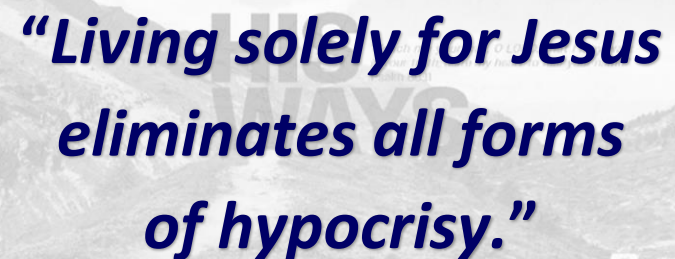
Jesus highlighted the significance of performing acts of righteousness, like giving, praying, and fasting in secret, as

mentioned in Matthew 6:4, 6, and 18. He promised that our Father, who observes in secret, will reward us. Therefore, fasting should be accompanied by focused prayer and studying God's Word. It is crucial to remember that merely skipping a meal does not equate to fasting. True fasting is a deliberate act of seeking the Lord and aligning ourselves with His will. It is more than just abstaining from food; it involves a focused intention to draw closer to God and surrender to His guidance. Jesus extends an invitation to all believers to fast, regardless of their spiritual maturity. By participating in prayer and fasting alongside the church community, we can experience the profound transformative power of this spiritual discipline.

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#### Ponder and Pray:

- How can we discern between genuine spiritual practices and hypocritical ones?
  - Pray that God will grant us the strength to overcome false spirituality and cultivate a genuine relationship with Him. May we be faithful stewards and seek to live a life that reflects God's love and truth.
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***“Living solely for Jesus  
eliminates all forms  
of hypocrisy.”***