Do It In Secret

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Preacher: Edward Kang

[0:00] Good morning, guys. Thank you to Todd and David for such a fun edition of our Sunday announcements today.! We're going to continue on in the Sermon on the Mount this morning as we read and open up with chapter 6.

Our text is Matthew 6, 1-6. And then we're skipping the Lord's Prayer altogether because that most certainly deserves its own sermon. And then we'll read verses 16-18.
I think you'll see soon why we grouped this text like this. I was discussing the sermon with our very own Steve Miller, who mentioned that this is the perfect text for me to preach on as I start full-time ministry.
And I couldn't agree more. This text has been a mirror to me, revealing my pride, my self-righteousness, but also the kindness of my Heavenly Father.
So let's pray now that the Spirit of God will show us both of those things this morning. Heavenly Father, Father, you are in heaven, high and holy, but you're also our Father.
[1:23] And you meet us where we are, meek and lowly. We are in awe of you. That when we fall short of your standards, of your teachings, that your heart towards us isn't to reject us, isn't to fold your arms, to say, try again next time.

But you love us. You welcome us in as a good, good Father does. And we need to be reminded of that fatherly love this morning.
Our hearts are sick, craving for affirmation and approval, and we look for it in so many of the wrong places. But I pray, Lord, won't you open our eyes to see that your heart, your disposition towards us, is one of love and compassion and kindness, so that we would be able to not fear man, and not seek the approval of man, but to seek your approval and your reward.
Help us, Father, to that end. We need your spirit to convict us and to help us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Please stand, if you are able, for the reading of God's word.
We're in Matthew 6, starting in verse 1. 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.
[3:18] Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.

But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.
And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites, for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.
But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces, that their fasting may be seen by others.
Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others, but by your heavenly Father, but by your Father who is in secret.
[4:33] And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. This is God's holy and authoritative word. You may be seated. Back in the early 2000s, there was this era of youth-oriented, high-production, culturally relevant megachurches like Hillsong.

And there was an up-and-coming church that challenged Hillsong with over 21,000 members, multi-campus, taking over Australia, and it was called Planet Shakers Church.

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It gained massive international attention, and at its helm was this young, charismatic, energetic speaker named Michael Guglielmucci, who filled stadiums and he wrote chart-topping music.
People loved Mike for his authenticity, his approachableness, his passion for the Lord. All was going great for Planet Shakers and for Mike until he dropped this bomb on them.
He had cancer. Not just any kind of cancer, but a rare form of blood cancer that left him with years, maybe even months, to live.
[5:55] But amazingly, he didn't let that stop him. He continued to go around churches, preaching like a dying man, exhorting the younger generation to never stop trusting in the Lord.

even when he needed a cane to walk, even when all his hair fell out because of the chemo, and when he needed to be hooked up even to oxygen on the stage.
He never stopped preaching. He led worship and he performed his hit song, Healer, which lyrics go, you hold my every moment, you calm my raging seas, you walk with me through fire and heal all my disease.
I trust in you. In every way, Mike was a model example of someone who holds on to faith in such a hard situation.
Or so it seemed. It turned out that Mike was lying the entire time about his cancer diagnosis. Not just to the public, not just to his church, but to his own family, his own wife.
[7:09] He would have them drop him off at the hospital, but never let them come in with him. And it turns out that he shaved his own head, he faked his oxygen tube on stage, and he acted a limp into his walk.

to make matters worse. He confessed that he was using this cancer diagnosis to hide a secret sin, a decades-long addiction to adult videos.
Michael Guglielmucci was a hypocrite, a double life fraud. In our passage this morning, Jesus warns us of this hypocrisy.
Verse 1 says, 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. This is a sobering verse this morning that acts like the thesis statement for the rest of our passage.
Jesus is saying that the motive by which you practice your righteousness before others is not a light matter. There sadly have been way too many men, like the scribes and the Pharisees that we're going to read about, that have acted like all they want is to please the Lord, but in reality, they don't have an ounce of genuine desire.
[8:38] Their only motivation is self-glory. Jesus warns that those who have won the praise of the entire world by their hypocrisy, like Mike Guglielmucci, will not receive an ounce of reward from their heavenly father.

unless they repent. So instead, in our passage, Jesus teaches us a better way. Other than in verse 1, our passage is split into three congruent passages, and it doesn't take long to see a pattern between all three sections.
First, Jesus rebukes the hypocrites for practicing acts of righteousness to be seen by men. And in all three sections, he has the same judgment. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.
And then comes the contrast. But you, you should do all that the hypocrite is doing, but in secret.
And then, this is the identical line again.
He says, your father, who sees in secret, will reward you. The main idea of this passage isn't hard to identify. Jesus makes it clear that we should practice our righteousness in secret to be seen and rewarded by God, not man.
[9:59] And in turn, we're going to look at how Jesus speaks about how we are to give, not grandstand. We're to pray, not play act.

We're to fast, and not feign. Let's jump into the first of his examples now, which is all about giving to the poor. Back then, giving to the poor was an essential part of society because unlike us today, the poor didn't have government welfare systems to rely on.
Instead, they had to depend entirely on the donations of the public run through a system by the Jewish synagogues. And in that system, significant donations, big donations, were likely broadcasted, publicized to the entire society.
So you can just imagine how ripe the circumstances were for these hypocrites, these scribes and Pharisees that Jesus most likely is referring to here, to practice their righteousness to win the praise of man.

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The word hypocrite originally referred to a theatrical actor, which I think is such a fitting description. of what these men are doing. It really seems like they know and love God by their acts of righteousness, but in actuality, they're only convincing method actors.
[11:22] They toot their trumpets in a musical performance. They perform their long prayer monologues. They even costume up. They wear makeup, as we'll see later.

Here Jesus exposes their hypocrisy as they give to the poor only to hear that trumpet played and only to hear the people ooh and ah at their generosity and their holiness.
Mind you, this man is not pretending to give. He's not lying about it. He's actually giving. So he's doing an act of kindness.
Anyone with two eyes can see that. But yet, Jesus isn't impressed. For Jesus, it's not enough for us to just throw money at the poor and expect that to please him.
If that were the case, mega YouTube star, Mr. Beast, if you guys know him, Jimmy Donaldson, he would be the most righteous of us with his long list of philanthropic achievements.
[12:31] And these YouTube videos that you guys likely have seen, they're insane. He donates a year's salary to every family in a village in Uganda or he pays for a thousand deaf people and their surgeries so that they can hear for the first time.

On first glance, it seems that Jesus would be impressed by such acts of generosity and kindness. But here, out of Donaldson's own mouth, the rationale, the motive by which he gives.
Near the beginning of Donaldson's success, he posted this video in which he gives to his mom $100,000 in cold, hard cash. Can you imagine? And at first, she refuses, but he insists, says, if I don't give this to you, I don't have a viral video.
You're using me for views, she asks. And he's honest. He says, yes, but you get money too. So we're both happy. This philanthropic content has been a key part to Donaldson's explosive growth to fame.
These videos rack up hundreds of millions of views. Even I want to watch a thousand deaf people to regain their hearing again. But this is nothing new.
[13:54] The scribes and the Pharisees were long onto this strategy long before Mr. Beast. In fact, they were the original Mr. Beast who flaunted their generous giving.

It's not actually giving because in actuality, they're buying. They're just using their money to buy the respect and clout of society. And Jesus himself knows that this strategy works.
He acknowledges that there is a reward to this kind of behavior when he says three times in our passage, truly I say to you, they have received their reward. But what's the problem with this kind of reward?
A lot of things, but let me just highlight two aspects. Number one, this praise, this clout, it's caffeine. caffeine. It's high fructose corn syrup.
It's an addictive stimulant. It's ephemeral, temporary, burns hot for a second and leaves you crashing the next. Like the high of a drug, it never satisfies, but it hooks you.
[15:03] It addicts you to the next hit, to the next achievement, to the next affirming person, the next compliment. Then you're only as good as your next achievement. But more importantly, the reward of man, it forfeits the true reward of God because we cannot serve both God and man.

It's binary. It's one or the other. So Jesus seriously warns us to be careful because if this is all that you're working towards, if this is all that you're striving for, then you might just get it.
But that's all you're going to get. So friends, we should not expect to please Jesus if we're not even aiming to do so.
So instead of this hypocrisy, what should we do? We should give in total secret. That's what Jesus says. Here, Jesus isn't directly commanding us to give to the needy, but he's assuming that we're doing so.
We can't give in secret unless we're not giving at all. So this is a time to just quickly evaluate. Am I matching? Is the way that I use my money match Jesus' assumption about me?
[16:20] My budget, my spending habits? But this passage isn't about the amount of money that we give, but it's more about the motivation with which we give.

for Jesus commands us while the right hands of the hypocrites are tooting their horns and they're blasting their socials to tell the entire world of how good of a person they are and all that they're doing, your right hand shouldn't even tell the left what it's doing.

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That's how secretive you are to be. Why? Because when you give in secret, your father who sees in secret will reward you.
This is a fascinating comment from Jesus. Do you notice that he doesn't say you should give in secret because this is the right thing to do? You know, sometimes we think that the true Christian thing is to completely divorce ourselves from any self-interested desire.
We think we should only be outward focused and do the right thing only because it's the right thing. Because we love others and we love God so we shouldn't be in it for ourselves.
[17:38] And there is a way that this certainly does become selfish but amazingly, Jesus doesn't think that it is automatically, inherently selfish for us to be motivated by future reward.

instead he's intentionally holding out to us a greater, a better reward. And so what he's ultimately rebuking the scribes and the Pharisees for is not that they are self-interested but it's that they're not self-interested in the right way.
Like a little boy who stuffs himself with candy before dinner, these scribes and their Pharisees, these Pharisees, they're too easily stuffing themselves with the praise of man, the lesser things which then disqualifies them from a better, heartier meal, a future reward that's going to be far better than anything man can give.
In other words, they're too nearsighted to be able to see far ahead and long for something better. I don't know if you guys know this about me, some of you guys do, but I'm terribly nearsighted.
My eyes are really, really bad, right? Like I can basically only see clearly three to four inches in front of me. My wife has joked that probably it's not a joke, but that I would be utterly useless when I have to defend her in a fight because all you have to do is just knock the glasses off and just going to be throwing punches blindly.
[19:07] But just like the best solution for nearsightedness is not to put out our eyes and go blind, thank God, but it's to correct our vision with glasses, with contacts.

We shouldn't blind ourselves from reward, but instead correct our vision, have a better long-term view of heavenly rewards. seeking God's reward as Jesus encourages, it's not mercenary, it's not impure, but it honors God because it's our acknowledgement that only he has what can truly satisfy. He brings us the greatest joy and deepest happiness. That's what I want. That's what you say. Do we immediately consider a man selfish when he marries a woman because he anticipates a lifetime of happiness with her?
It's not immediately selfish, but it's honoring to her. In the same way, if we resolve to not please man, but to please God for this future reward for millions of lifetimes of happiness with him, that's not selfish, but that's honoring to him.
God is glorified in us when we live with the conviction, with the desire that our greatest satisfaction and our reward is found in him and him alone. We have to hit pause and just say the fact alone though that God would reward me, me, is utterly astounding.
[20:48] For who am I but only an unworthy servant that should just do whatever he tells me to do whenever he tells me to do it? Should the master thank his servant if he just does what he's commanded of?

And while that is true, that our relationships with God is like that, of master and servant, Jesus doesn't frame our relationship with him like this in our passage today.
I don't know if you've noticed but the word that is most frequently repeated in our passage is not righteousness, it's not hypocrite, but it's the word father.
In fact, Matthew 6 has the word father the most amount of times in this one chapter compared to all the rest of the book of Matthew. And by this super concentration of this title, Jesus is highlighting the intimate relationship that we now have as God being our heavenly father and we his children. That he is not a stingy, hard to please master. He's not a stern, aloof judge. but that he is a good, good father that loves us and is desiring to give us good gifts.
[22:05] This is, this is a massive idea that we need to internalize more and more because without believing this, we will never be able to give in secret. We'll never be able to practice our righteousness in secret because if we don't truly believe that God sees us and delights to reward us, then we're going to seek the affirmation that we so crave in other places.

But if he's a father that jumps at the chance of blessing you, of rewarding you, you can now give in secret knowing that there is going to be a great heavenly reward for you.

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So give, give in secret. Even when the world is scheming their way to popularity and to the top, when everyone is praising that guy who seems to be getting so much attention for his acts of righteousness, we can be last, be overlooked, be invisible because knowing, we know that our future, our heavenly reward will be so satisfying.
And in that pursuit of rewards, we not just give in secret, but we pray in secret, which brings me to my second point. In verses 5-6, Jesus rebukes the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees for the way that they pray.
And just like they gave to the needy, these actors are merely continuing to play the part as they lift up these long, lofty prayer monologues in the synagogues and the street corners.
[23:43] And because they love the stage and they love the limelight, you can just imagine them scheming, today, where should I pray? Should I pray in that corner next to the synagogue by the market?

Gets a lot of foot traffic. But it's kind of loud, market's kind of loud, I don't know if people are going to be able to hear me when I hit my climax, so let me pray on the other corner.
You see, there's a marked difference between someone who egregiously abuses religion for his own gain and operates like there is no God versus someone like you and me who struggles honestly with fear of man.
But while we might not scheme as intensely, we can relate to this hypocrite, can't we? I for sure can. Why do our palms get sweaty and our hearts beat just a little bit faster when it comes to our turn to pray at prayer meetings?
Why do we feel the need to throw in theological jargon and Christianese so that we sound better when we pray? Is it because we know who we're praying to?
[24:55] Do we know that we're praying to the Ancient of Days, to El Elyon, the God Most High, to El Shaddai, the God Almighty?

or is it because we know that Bobby is sitting in the corner over there and we want to impress little old Bobby? Pastor Derek Prime captures this phenomenon well when he says, we find ourselves aware of the stars only when we cannot see the sun.
We are preoccupied with men only when our minds are turned away from God. God. So may we never forget that the central purpose of prayer is to actually pray to God.
I know, groundbreaking theology, but there are times that I've done this way too many times that we pray with a motive primarily not to communicate to God, but to communicate to the people around us.
It could be for good reasons. We want to communicate good truths. We want to remind somebody of this thing so we pray for it out loud. Or, for instance, in front of our kids we try to be a healthy example for them to emulate so we pray.
[26:18] Those are all great benefits of praying and I continue to pray in public and with others, but when prayer in your heart primarily becomes about communicating to the people around you horizontally, instead of praying vertically to God, slowly but surely, prayer is no longer prayer, but it's play acting.

But prayer is one of the greatest privileges that we ought to never take for granted or abuse. To approach the throne of glory.
can you imagine communicating to this God just like the prophet Isaiah did in his vision of the Lord seated on the throne high and lifted up with the train of his robe filling the temples with the seraphim around him proclaiming, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.
Can you imagine that we get to pray to that God and he hears us on the regular, on the daily, not only that, but prayer is one of the most intimate things that we get to share with God.
I've heard one of my seminary professors, when asked about his private prayer life, commented that he doesn't like to talk about his prayer life because for him it feels like he's talking about his private love life.
[27:40] That's how intimate it feels to him and his relationship is with God. God. So then how twisted is it then to use the privilege of prayer, the intimacy of prayer and use it for our own selfish gain?

I once heard a story of a pastor who was well known for just having a remarkable, deep, fervent love for his wife. He simply absolutely adored her, the ways that his eyes would sparkle looking at her.

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The way that he would speak about her, the way he would wait on her hand and foot. Everyone just knew, even 40 years into his marriage, that he was head over heels in love with his wife.
Tragically, when he lost her, he spoke at our funeral. And when he did, everyone was expecting this grand display of his amazing love for her.
And if anyone could do it, it was him. But when he got up there, it was a plain speech. Basic facts about his wife, the ministry she carried out, and how she was faithful to the end.
[28:55] He didn't speak about the thousands of times that they prayed together, the daily walks that they shared, the inside jokes that brought out the smile that he so dearly missed. at the end, people came up to ask him, we know, we know that you have loved your wife.

Why didn't you speak more passionately about your love for her? And to which he replied, this funeral is to honor my wife and the life that she lived.
It's not an opportunity for me to show off my love for her. This is not about me. In the same way, prayer is not an opportunity for us to show off our love for God.
It's not about us. But how many of us struggle to pray with this kind of self-forgetful humility? Whether we arrogantly think that we can impress others, or we're anxious, and we worry about embarrassing ourselves, we still make prayer about us.
We forget who we're praying to. Not just in prayer, but we live with that kind of self-attention, that self-focus often, often in a lot of what we do.
[30:14] So we don't live in fear of God, but we live in fear of man. But if we were instead to walk in fear of the Lord, we'd be able to live out what Tim Keller has said.

True gospel humility means that I stop connecting every experience, every conversation, and I add every prayer with myself. In fact, I stop thinking about myself.
Oh, how amazing would that be to stop thinking about yourself? How liberating would it be to forget yourself and to pray openly and honestly before others and to God?
How joyful would it be to stop your performing and stop our play acting to impress people, but to be who we are and to pray as we are?
I'm not preaching anything new. Most of us know that we shouldn't fear man and we should fear God alone. But honestly, and I feel this, that feels like something that's so hard to do.
[31:19] It feels like there's such a large gap between what we know in our heads and what is in our hearts. It feels like there's such a large gap between what we want to live like and what we are today. So how do we realistically get from here to there?

To that end, Jesus recommends that we ought to pray in secret in the privacy of our rooms because our heavenly father sees, not just sees in secret, but he is in secret.
If the Lord is in secret and invisible to the human eye, then one of the ways we should draw near to him should match that, to meet him invisibly from the rest of the human eyes.
Of course, I don't think that Jesus is literally commanding us to never pray with others. Of course, that would go against many other examples in scripture, even Jesus' own example in the book of John.
In the book of Acts, there are multiple examples in the church gathering together to pray with great power. And I've just tasted and seen a part of that, praying with you guys. I've been built up and encouraged when I hear you guys pray.
[32:34] But there is something to this practice of secret prayer, of going into a prayer closet. You know, practically in a TikTok, Netflix, Twitter-infested world, it's hard enough to pray five minutes without internal distraction.

We don't need to be bombarded with external distraction. It would be wise of us to find a spot in our homes, in our rooms, if possible, that is device-less, distraction-less, where it could just be you and God.
And if you don't have those spots in our home, we're going to have a spot at the church office, a little nook that's hidden away that you can come and pray in secret. And plan, plan into your schedule those times of prayer in those closets.
Of course, have spontaneous times of prayer, but don't neglect the planned times either. Just as my marriage needs both the planned date night and the spontaneous fun, our relationships with God need both too.
But there is something more to this practice of praying in secret, for it is in that place where the Spirit of God does His work. He builds that bridge between head and heart.

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[33:53] At first, when we begin doing this, our temptation will be to pray like the Pharisee in Luke 18. We say, Lord, thank you that I'm not like the others who don't pray as much as me, that don't have a prayer closet like I do.

But when we are still before God long enough, the deep, the ugly stuff that we all carry, the stuff that we're often too busy to identify and to recognize and acknowledge, a desperate longing for people's approval, a lingering guilt from past mistakes, unspoken fears about the future, a deep insecurity, envy over a friend's success, all that stuff begins to rise to the surface.
And we see that the only prayer worth praying in that prayer closet is that of the tax collector. Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner, as we beat our chests.
And then the spirit of God begins to move. begins to do a work on us and gradually but surely constructs that bridge between head and heart.
We can now internalize the truths of the gospel. He draws us close to himself and reminds us of all the lies that we're believing and the truths that we're forgetting.
[35:28] Reminds us that God loves us based on what Jesus has done for us on the cross, not based on our performance, not based on what man thinks of us. And he empowers us in that secret place to live out the gospel, to live as if we actually believe it.

And there in the secret place, our fear of man is transformed into the fear of the Lord. And we learn there how to pray with a self-forgetful humility. Then when we pray self-forgetfully, either in private or in public, when we pray to get more of God and not to get more of man, he will reward us in heaven with a love that our hearts are so desperately yearning for.
That love that we've only tasted a part here but will be fuller, richer in that last day. So friend, recently, have you known, have you tasted the sweetness of the Lord where it's just you and him? have you felt the good Father work on your heart in your prayer closet? Have you sensed his gentle guidance speaking directly to your soul in those moments?
If we have, then God will help us to practice our righteousness, not to seek the attention of man, even as we fast, which brings me to my last point. In verses 16 to 18, Jesus again contrasts, showy hypocrisy and secret righteousness.
[37:05] This time with fasting. Fasting is the prayer of voluntarily abstaining from food for a specific amount of time so that we draw close to him in prayer.

It's a way to express both in soul and body that more than food, we need God more. It's a way to sharpen our hunger for God alone.
In a quintessential John Piper way to say this, he says, the greatest enemy of hunger for God is not poison, but apple pie. It's not the banquet of the wicked that dulls our appetite for heaven, but endless nibbling at the table of the world.
Once again, Jesus assumes that his disciples are fasting. It doesn't say if you fast, but when you fast. fast, especially given the start of prayer and fasting week, I want to challenge you and encourage you.
Fasting is one of the least practiced spiritual disciplines in the American church today. If you haven't ever fasted before, take some time to try to fast.
[38:18] Start off small. Fast just one meal, but use that time to express your desperation for the Lord and for the Lord alone. That more than food, I need God and God alone.

And as you make this a regular habit, you're going to see that just as he said, Jesus has food to eat that the world doesn't know about. But given that true fasting is the expression of desperation for God, what these hypocrites are doing is not fasting, but just going hungry, going on a diet.
like his theatrical giving or his ornate prayers, this hypocritical actor continued the act by skipping meals and on top of that, costuming up, putting on makeup by disfiguring his face, likely putting ashes or dirt on his head and face to make it readily apparent that he is on a fast.
The word disfigure in the Greek literally means to hide, and I think it highlights this rich, self defeating irony that this man is hiding his face behind a mask in order to be seen by others.
Once again, Jesus, though he spoke 2,000 years ago, speaks directly to our lives. It's relevant now. Because I think at the heart of this passage, Jesus is addressing, tapping into something innate in every single one of us here in this room.
[39:54] Every single one of us craves to be adored, approved of, accepted, and loved. There's not a single person on this earth that is not desperately and intensely yearning for that kind of acceptance.

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So when we put on these masks of religiosity and show off our works of righteousness to be able to win that kind of approval that our hearts are so desperately yearning for.
But when the show ends, the curtain closes and the lights turn off, do you know what you have to do? You have to go home.
You have to go home with yourself. You're not fooling anyone there. Because we know deep down that any amount of acting cannot change who we really are.
For the person we are in secret is a person that we really are. The person that you are when no one is looking is a person that you really are.
[41:08] Then who are the people that really know you? Really know you? Sure, our spouses and our best friends, they've seen a lot of your lows.

But if they were to watch a videotape of your life, if they heard or saw all of your inner thoughts, there would be so many things that we wouldn't want to show them.
They don't know who you really are. And if they did, they might not even love you. Only the Lord knows the real you.
We read this verse in the Assurance of Pardon 4.13 in Hebrews says, no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him.
To him we must give account. This is a terrifying verse, is it not? For all the murderous mutterings that we've said under our breath, because we thought no one would hear, God has heard.
[42:16] For all our lustful thoughts that we haven't told a single person about, God has seen. For all our manipulative lies that we thought we got away with, God has heard.

If you're any bit self-aware, you have to be wondering, how could I ever be loved by this God? But the amazing news of the gospel is that God has loved us, that he has loved us by sending his son to die for sinners like you and me.
That this God has not only just seen all the evil that you've done in the past, but all the future evil that you will do, and he still has committed himself to you, even to death.
Do you understand how preposterous is that idea that the creator God, perfect and holy, would take on every single one of my heinous sins, my secret sins, and that he's accepted me in Jesus.
Ever since Adam and Eve, sin has always made us feel naked and exposed. Our sin is the ultimate reason why we feel like we need to put on these masks and parade our righteousness, because we're just trying to cover up our guilt and cover up the shame of our sin.
[43:39] Isn't this exactly what Mike Guglielmucci did? Just as God graciously covered Adam and Eve, for those who have put their faith in Jesus, rest assured that he has now not only taken every single one of our sins, but he has covered you with his perfect righteousness so that he is getting rid of any need for a mask, any need to pretend anymore.

So only to the extent that you believe, not just with your head, but in your heart, when you internalize that truth, can we now lower our masks, can we now anoint our heads and wash our faces when we fast, not to seek the approval of man, but to seek the approval of God, the reward that only he can give.
And this, this can then transform this church, Trinity Cambridge Church, it's this power of the gospel that will enable us to be the community that he has called us to be, not a church where we need to put on our best face and pretend, pretend to be people that we're not, not a church, but a church that confesses sins, that is honest and open with where we are and who we are and humbles ourselves before others.
It's exhausting. I've done this. It's exhausting to continue to pretend. It's healing. It's healing to be honest and open.
And I pray that this church be a no mask, no performing, no play acting zone. Imagine what our church would be.
[45:28] Imagine how set apart we would be from the rest of the world, from any other place that you go to. Then the world will know us by our love. So as we give, we pray, we fast, we disciple, we counsel, we read, whatever we do, we can do it all not to seek the recognition of man.

Because of the things that happened in the past, the things that are happening present in the present, and the things that will happen in the future. Because of Jesus' past work on the cross to cover all sin, we are secured, we are covered in his righteousness.
There's no need for masks. Because of God's present work on us, when we meet with him in secret, we not only believe the gospel, but he helps us to internalize it and to walk as if we believe.

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And because of our future heavenly reward, we are motivated to reject the lesser, the smaller reward of man to wait for something far, far better. And when we tap into all of those reasons, we can practice our righteousness in secret, not to be seen by man and rewarded by man, but God and him alone.
And when we do that, we will hear that final day, well done, well done, good and faithful servant, enter the joy of your master. That will be the greatest thing you will ever hear in your lives.
[46:57] For that alone, I can't wait. Let's pray. So, Lord, we pray you would help us to internalize the gospel, that this church would be marked by a gospel culture where we don't need to pretend anymore, but we are honest because we are secure in the love of Christ.

Empower us today to do that. Help us to have a bigger view of you, God, and a smaller view of self. And then in all things, we would know that it's not us, but it is Christ in us that we can now live in this obedience.
Help us. In Jesus' name, amen.

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