<u>Almsgiving – Matthew 6:1-4</u>

Read Matthew 6:1-4

1. In the original language of the text almsgiving meant deeds of mercy, the giving of unearned help in order to serve a need. What sorts of things would fall under this definition?

2. Jesus is primarily concerned with what motivates our deeds of mercy. He opens the teaching here in vs. 1 by giving us a warning. In his book *Divine Conspiracy* Dallas Willard reflects on this warning and says there is nothing that blocks our growth in the kingdom; or damages our intimacy with God as Father more than desiring the praise of others. Do you agree? Why or why not?

3. (vs. 2) This verse is dripping with imagery from the Greek theatre. The Greek word hypocrite is the word for actor. The lead actor in a play was introduced with the blowing of trumpets. The phrase "in order to be seen by others" in the word theathi from which we get our word theatre. With this imagery Jesus is saying there is a way to do deed of mercy that is play acting, doing them to be praised, to be recognized, to be acknowledged, to gain a reputation. Where do you see this motivation in the human heart? What does it look like practically?

4. How would it impact how we give, and to whom we give, if we are doing it to be praised, to be recognized, to be acknowledged? How does it impact us personally? The recipient of our mercy?

5. Instead Jesus invites us to do deeds of mercy not letting our left hand know what our right hand is doing – to hide it even from ourselves. What would it practically look like to do deeds of mercy with self-forgetfulness?

6. Jesus desires that we would be motivates by one thing only – a reward that we can have from (meaning with) the father (vs. 1). What is this reward and how will reflecting on that reward transform our giving? Transform our hearts?