



## The Gospel of Matthew

### Outline 16

## ***Religion versus Kingdom***

### ***Do not be like the hypocrites... Matthew 6:5***

This is another outline where the text does the talking and teaching – direct!!

Our Lord Jesus was confronting religion head on by highlighting three key pillars of any world religious community – Giving alms, Prayer and Fasting. All these practices even though good in themselves are corrupted by wrong human motives. Let's take a look at **The Message** version of the Gospel of Matthew 6: 1-18 skipping the Lord's Prayer

#### **Alms Giving**

“Watch out! Don't do your good deeds publicly, to be admired by others, for you will lose the reward from your Father in heaven. <sup>2</sup> When you give to someone in need, don't do as the hypocrites do—blowing trumpets in the synagogues and streets to call attention to their acts of charity! I tell you the truth; they have received all the reward they will ever get. <sup>3</sup> But when you give to someone in need, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. <sup>4</sup> Give your gifts in private, and your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

#### **Prayer**

<sup>5</sup> “When you pray, don't be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth that is all the reward they will ever get. <sup>6</sup> But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

#### **Fasting**

<sup>16</sup> “And when you fast, don't make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, for they try to look miserable and dishevelled so people will admire them for their fasting. I tell you the truth, that is the only reward they will ever get. <sup>17</sup> But when you fast, comb your hair and wash your face. <sup>18</sup> Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in private. And your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

We had an amazing conversation during the service as we tackled the issue of church religion versus true Christianity. We asked the question, If we as Christians serve a God of Love, why aren't we known for our great Love for people? Do we find a lot of Love in Church?



The response was quite revealing and challenging concerning the state of the Body of Christ. Some of the statements were:

- Christians do not trust each other because so many have been hurt in church
- Many Christians are only interested in money and material things
- There is a lot of jealousy, back stabbing and strife in churches
- Lots of believers have taken their eyes off the essence of who Christ is
- Prosperity teachings and emphasis on material things have corrupted many a heart
- Many believers find that non-Christians have more integrity than church goers
- Lots of people go to church, but the church is not in them
- Many people in church focus on ME, MYSELF & I, which is basically selfishness.
- Many church doctrines focus on what we can get from God than what we can give to Him.

These amazing statements clearly show that if these are anecdotal experiences of the average Christian, then something is definitely very wrong. The Heart of the matter is the matter of the Heart. Our motives are misplaced when we engage with a system of religion and not with the Lord. If we know more about Authors and Preachers than we know the Lord then we run the risk of ship wrecking our faith in times of crisis. We also run the more severe risk of the Lord's Judgement on that Day!

**Many will say to Me on that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name and driven out demons in Your name and done many mighty works in Your name? And then I will say to them openly (publicly), I never knew you; depart from Me, you who act wickedly [disregarding My commands]. Matthew 7:22-23 Amplified**

Some may now ask, how can we know that we are truly serving the Lord and not religion? We will deal with this in our next study. My simple advice right now is, confess your sins everyday to the Lord and ask Him to examine your heart and show you where you miss it...He will!!