

Sunday, June 11, 2017
Did You Know?

Private and Public Spirituality

At the recent men's retreat I was speaking to an old friend who is the father of two young children. He shared with me that recently, his daughter had "caught" him in the act of reading the Bible, where upon she exclaimed, "Daddy, you read the Bible too?!!" I think his reply was something like, "Yes. Of course, but I read when you're sleeping." or something to that effect. She had never personally witnessed her father reading the Bible. He shared with me that he realized the importance of doing our faith where our children can see. That got me thinking about the importance of both private and public spirituality in our families, but also in all of our lives.

In the Sermon on the Mount there are two passages that, at a cursory glance, may appear to contradict, but upon closer inspection, we find that they are complementary. On the one hand, Jesus tells us, "Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matt 5:16). Yet on the other hand, he says, "Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven" (Matt 6:1) and "But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you" (Matt 6:6) and "But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you" (Matt 6:17-18).

How do we make sense of these verses? In this entire section from 6:1-18, Jesus addresses the importance of having the right motives in performing religious duties like prayer, fasting and giving. We are to do our duties not to appear religious before people but rather to please God, alone. Our religion is not for show, but at the same time it is not invisible either. The people around us, at school or work, and especially our children, should notice that we, as Christian people, are living out Kingdom values and ethics. We know how impressionable children are. We know how well they can sniff out any hint of our hypocrisy. Therefore, it is important for us to model sincere faith in front of them. They should see us reading and praying. They should see how we respect our spouses in our tone and language and in the way we argue. They should see us passionately worshiping Jesus or attentively listening to the sermon, when they sit next to us in church. They should often hear from us the words, "I'm sorry." They should see our compassion for the poor and our heart towards non-Christians. They should see how the Gospel affects every area of our lives. So, parents and all of God's people, shine your lights brightly, so that others may see your good deeds and glorify God.

Soli Deo Gloria

Pastor Peter