

2ND MILE GIVING

CRAIG REES

KEY VERSES:

Matthew 5:14-16; 6:1-4; Acts 4:32-5:11; Galatians 2:10; Romans 12:20.

Also Proverbs 21:13; Isaiah 10:2; Amos 5:11-12, 24; 8:4; Micah 2:2

1. Three phrases in the opening four verses of Matthew chapter 6—‘to be seen’, ‘trumpets’, and ‘hypocrites’—set followers of Jesus on a cosmic stage. How easy is it for you to see yourself as ‘an actor on the cosmic stage’? What benefits can you think of to a believer seeing themselves as significant ‘players’ in the unfolding cosmic drama?
2. Jesus says that those whose ‘almsgiving’ is observed have received their reward. Jesus neither condemns 1st mile giving nor the rewards attached to it but merely affirms the earthly or social setting. Can you think of examples where charitable giving receives earthly or social rewards?
3. 1st Mile giving reflected a commitment Jews had to ‘improving the world’ through their religious community. The practice of ‘tzedakah’ (meaning righteousness and justice) was commonly used to signify charity. As society modernized, such charity was frequently overlooked causing the Old Testament prophets to decry the unrighteousness of the people because it offended the ideal of social justice that the covenant of Yahweh demanded (see Isa. 10:2; Amos 5:11-12, 24; 8:4; Micah 2:2). 1st mile giving was therefore obedience giving. Matthew 6:2 clearly shows Jesus expected his followers to give. With the full teaching of the Bible in view, what signifies obedient or 1st mile giving? Is it giving to the poor or is there more than that?
4. How easy is it to live in the first mile? What makes it so hard?
5. Compare Matthew 5:14-16 with Matthew 6:1-4. What key differences do you observe about each passage that helps us apply what Jesus expects of his followers? One example could be that acts of compassion become acts of vanity when pride fuels our giving. What other applications can you draw by comparing these two passages?
6. Acts 4:32-5:11 expresses the principles Jesus makes in story form. If you have time, read the passage and contrast the attitude of Barnabas, who is commended, with Ananias and Saphira who are confronted. What do we learn from this comparison that helps us understand what Jesus was striving at?
7. Pastor Craig defined hypocrisy as ‘what the heart is thinking when the hand is doing?’ What other definitions of hypocrisy have you heard? Which of these works well and why?
8. If first mile giving is commitment 2nd mile giving is gratitude. 2nd mile giving is when people see the heart of The Deliverer moving the hands of the givers. How can we move from obedient or committed giving to grateful giving?
9. Read Romans 12:20, noting the phrase, ‘heaping burning coals on their head.’ With Pastor Kory’s with 2nd mile application of ‘why are you doing this?’ in mind (why would you go further than the law required?), how does generosity to others help us point people to Jesus?