

A God Who Hungers

Wednesday, March 6 at 11 & 7

Ash Wednesday – 2019

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: “Behold the man!” Do you remember those words? Pilate had ordered that Jesus be flogged; then the Bible records that “[Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe.](#) [Then] [Pilate said to \[the crowd\], ‘Behold the man!’](#)” (Jo 19:5 ESV).

Think about Jesus... skin and bones, a heart and lungs, fingers and toes, and a mouth and a stomach, *so behold the man!* Also, a heartbeat and breath, walking and talking, praying and eating, and laughing and crying, *so behold the man!*

Like us – *Jesus was tempted*, but unlike us – *Jesus had no sin!* Think about the first Adam... God told him to not eat from a particular tree, but then he did, *so he fell and brought us down with him.* But Jesus, the second Adam, not only fasted for a long time, but also, when tempted to turn stones into bread, *He did not fall into sin; He was sinless in our place!* So behold the man, the *perfect man*, and *our sinless substitute!*

Today’s sermon text is a part of Matthew chapter 6, *which is a part of the Sermon on the Mount.* In our text Jesus will instruct us about giving, praying, and fasting!

1. **Giving:** ¹ [“Beware of practicing your righteousness \[right behavior\] before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.](#) ² [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. ³ But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. // The main point is that we should “sound no trumpet” when we give! Here are some other things to keep in mind:

- a. Practicing right behavior: As ones who are forgiven in Christ, we desire to behave rightly, *but we should NOT do so for the purpose of being seen by others!*
- b. Giving to the needy: ♦It’s NOT an IF, *but a WHEN*, ♦it is to be done in secret, and ♦it is to come from our share, *rather than God’s share* (which is the first 10%, [Lev. 27:30](#)).
- c. Receiving the Father’s reward: That fact is meant to encourage us to ***give in secret*** to those in need!

2. **Praying**: ⁵ “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. ⁶ 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... // The main point is that those who believe in Jesus “**must not be like the hypocrites.**” A hypocrite is an actor, a pretender; when people pray like a hypocrite, they are putting on a show, pretending to pray, *but not really praying*. Here are some other things to keep in mind:

- a. Praying: ♦It’s NOT an IF, *but a WHEN*, ♦it is to be done in secret, and ♦it is normally directed to our Father in

heaven – so we pray ✨ to the Father, ✨ through the Son, and ✨ with the help of the Holy Spirit!

- b. Receiving the Father's reward: That fact is meant to encourage us to **pray in secret for those in need!**

3. **Fasting**: ¹⁶ “**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.** ¹⁷ **But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face,** ¹⁸ **that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. //**

These are the main points: When you fast, do not be like the actors, the pretenders and do so in secret!

- a. Fasting: ✨ It's NOT an IF, *but a WHEN*, ✨ it is to be done in secret, and ✨ it is to be done for the purpose of turning our attention to Jesus, who †gave up the glory of heaven, †gave up all sinful pleasure, and *ultimately* †gave up His very life, *all for us and for our salvation!*
- b. Fasting is normal: Fasting may seem abnormal to us, *but not for Jesus and others.*
- i. In this Sunday's gospel reading, we will read about Jesus fasting for 40 days and 40 nights (Lu 4:2)!
 - ii. The German word for Lent is *Fastenzeit*; that word literally means, “fasting time.”
 - iii. Regarding the Lord's Supper, Dr. Luther wrote that **“Fasting and bodily preparation are certainly fine outward training.”**¹

¹ Martin Luther, Small Catechism, Sacrament of the Altar (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986).

iv. Dr. Luther also wrote that “It is right to fast frequently in order to subdue and control the body.”² Then, *to answer what fasting is*, he wrote that “True fasting consists in the disciplining and restraining of your body, which pertains not only to eating, drinking, and sleeping, but also to your leisure, your pleasure, and to everything that may delight your body...”³

c. Receiving the Father’s reward: That fact is meant to encourage us to **fast in secret** – ✦not telling anyone, ✦nor acting like we are hungry, ✦nor showing any outward expression of discomfort.

Conclusion: Today and always, †let us think about Jesus, †let us behold the man, and †let us be in awe of His perfect and painful work on our behalf to take away our sins!

Then ✦let us give to the needy in secret – *remembering that we are managers rather than owners*, ✦let us pray in secret – *believing that doing so is powerful for others and beneficial for us*, and ✦let us fast in secret – *knowing that God will use such fasting to bless us in body and soul!*

Let Us Pray: Dear Lord Jesus, *our God in human flesh*, thank You for Your victory, teaching, and example for us!

Some of the content of this sermon is from the series, Behold the Man (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2018).

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² Martin Luther, *What Luther Says* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), §506.

³ Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, vol. 21, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1956), 160.