

Read: Matthew 6:1-6,16-21

Kindness in Quietness

Matthew 6:1a,3-4 EHV

Be careful that you do not do your righteous works in front of people, so that they will notice. Instead, when you perform acts of mercy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. Then your acts of mercy will be in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

You might know the kind of person—the one who brags—the kind of person who brags about where they're going, what they're doing, and who they're with. It eventually becomes hard to listen to and even be around them. Bragging is such a human thing to do. We like to talk about ourselves because it makes us feel good about ourselves. God warns against bragging, especially when it comes to the good things we do for others that makes us feel good about ourselves. God wants us to serve each other, to reach out to others with kindness, and to show mercy. Yet, he does not want us to brag about it in front of others.

Why is it so easy to fall into the temptation called pride? It's one thing to feel satisfaction and a sense of joy in helping others. When your mom recognizes that you have washed the dishes for her, it makes you feel good. We can be proud—in a good way—about a job well done. But if the only reward for helping is so you can tell everyone else, "Look what I did today! I did the dishes and Mom didn't even ask!" Don't be surprised if someone comments that your head is so big it won't fit through the door.

God's Word encourages this: "When you perform acts of mercy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. Then your acts of mercy will be in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you." We can be content knowing that God sees our good deeds done out of love for him and our fellow Christians and it pleases him. Just as God was pleased with Jesus who humbly covered our sin of pride on the cross.

In the chapter before our reading, Jesus speaks to the crowd, "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5). Meek means quiet and gentle. Do good ... quietly. Gently. Humbly. God sees and will give you your reward in heaven. That's even more than we could ask for and better than any earthly thanks or praise from others.

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- Instead of bragging (talking only about yourself), name one thing you could do instead.
- *Think* of (don't say it) something kind you did for someone else today. Then quietly ask God to use it to bless that person.

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- How does it make you feel when someone brags to you about how good they are?
- To put humility into practice, think of one good thing you can do for someone tomorrow without them even knowing.

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Name two reasons why God warns against boasting about our good deeds.
- Ask members of your family to share stories about the consequences of pride and boasting. What can you learn from them to fight against this temptation?

Closing Prayer:

Dear Lord God, sometimes it is so easy to boast about what I do and who I am. I know this is not God-pleasing, and I ask you to forgive me. Help me to be kind and loving to everyone. Give me a gentle and quiet spirit. And if the only one who sees what I do is you, may that be my greatest reward! I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.