



water from rock

Selah : Stop, Look, Listen – June 22, 2024

The Lord be with you.

John Wooden is remembered as one of the greatest coaches in sports history. Although he's long gone from us, he continues to inspire with his emphasis on fundamentals, teamwork and character. John Wooden said that the true test of a man's character is what he does when no one is watching. What we do when no one is watching is something I've been thinking about recently and something that I want to think aloud with you for the next few moments.

What we do when no one is watching, well, that's something that Jesus talked a lot about, for instance, take Jesus' words in the sermon on the mount where Jesus emphasizes the importance of what we do in secret when no one is watching. Take Matthew chapter six, right in the heart of Jesus' sermon on the Mount Matthew six verse four, Jesus says, when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing so that your arms may be done in secret and your father who sees in secret will reward you.

And then in verse six, Jesus says, don't pray like those who pray to be seen by others. But he says, whenever 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. And then verse 18, talking about fasting, he says to do it so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Throughout this passage. Jesus is emphasizing the importance of what you and I do in secret and what our father who is in secret sees us doing. Jesus emphasizes the importance of our giving, our prayer, our acts of devotion that they not be seen by others, but to do them to be seen by our heavenly Father. And Jesus assures us that the Father led, that he sees what we do in secret and he will reward us.

Jesus knows that it is easy for us to do the right thing when we're being watched, when we get recognition and praise. But it is in the secret moments of our lives that our true character is revealed. And God who sees in secret rewards. In this section of the sermon on the Mount Jesus is teaching what devout observant Jews of his time called Mitzvah Lishma.

Let me, let me spell that out for you. That's M I T Z VA H and then L I S H M A and Mitzvah Lishma literally means a commandment for its own sake. That is we do what God commands for us to do for its own sake, to please God and not for recognition, our praise or reward by people. Practical examples of Mitzvah Lishma like what Jesus mentions here would be would be in secret to help someone in need without expecting anything in return, any recognition, any reward. I like what Jesus says. My my left hand not even knowing what my right hand is giving. It would mean in secret to visit the sick. To give support to someone who's hurting without expecting any acknowledgment, a repayment. In secret to spend time



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in prayer like like Jesus so oftentimes did in secret, spend time in prayer without anyone needing to know about it.

The essence of our character is revealed in what we do in secret, unseen by others when the world isn't watching. Like so much of the sermon on the mount, this seems so countercultural in an age of social media when we are encouraged to put it all out there, all the details of our lives, a curated idealized version of ourselves. But Jesus is saying that is what we do in secret, that our true character is revealed. That is where integrity, integrity is forged. It's easy to do the right thing when I know that I'm being watched and I know people will affirm me, applaud me. But our heavenly Father sees what we do in secret and he rewards, he rewards.

First Samuel chapter 16 verse seven, tells us that the Lord does not look at the things, people look at, people, look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart, you and me doing the right thing, the generous thing, the good thing in secret. When no one else sees, tells the heavenly father of our love for him and our desire to please him.

Loving Father, we do long to draw closer to you in every part of our lives we want to give to you. Not just the times of public worship, of public service, but those secret times unseen by anyone, but you take her secret moments and use them to make us more and more like Jesus wholly devoted to you. And it is in the name of Jesus that we pray. Amen.

I am Tim Smith, a fellow traveler. Thank you for listening. Until next time.