

Text: Matthew 5:44—6:4

I am amazed at how many people want desperately to please their fathers. So many people would love to hear their fathers tell them that he is proud of them and their accomplishments. They desperately want his approval. Sadly, many will never know if they have succeeded in pleasing their father because he will never offer his approval in any tangible form.

However, it is not that way with our heavenly Father. Although we know according to His word that He loves us unconditionally, we can also clearly know if we have pleased Him. All we must do is make sure that our lives are pleasing to Him.

Note the *conditions* of behavior that we must meet in order to find our heavenly Father's approval on our lives.

I. IF YOUR LOVE IS LIKE YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER'S LOVE (vv. 44-45).

A. Be concerned for those who deserve no concern (v. 44).

B. Be impartial to those who deserve partiality (v. 45-47).

“He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.” If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?”

I. IF YOUR HEART IS LIKE YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER'S HEART (vv. 48-6:1).

“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

A. Give with a pure motive (6:2).

“So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.”

B. Seek only to benefit others in your giving (6:3-4a).

“But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret.”

I. YOUR REWARD WILL BE CERTAIN.

“Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

A. Your heavenly father sees all.

B. Your heavenly father is faithful to reward.

CONCLUSION

Jeannette Clift George told the following story. “On a short flight from Tucson to Phoenix, as I got on, I noticed a young woman with her baby. They were both dressed in white pinafores. The mother was smiling, and the little baby was saying “Dada, Dada.” And the little baby was darling. She wore a little pink bow where there would probably be hair pretty soon, and it was just darling. And they sat down opposite me. Every time anybody went by, the baby would say, “Dada,

Dada."

The young mother said they were going home, and Daddy was waiting for them. I think they had been gone overnight--it was a long, long time like that!

Everybody was so happy, and we all enjoyed the little baby. The mother had a little Thermos with orange juice in it. She kept feeding the baby, a little fruit and then a little juice. It was a rough flight. Every time the baby cried the mother fed her a little bit more orange juice and a little more fruit.

I don't know how to get out of this story without telling you the truth. The flight was very turbulent. (The flight was so rough that the attendants had to stay seated.) All of the fruit that had gone down came up. I think more came up than had gone down; I think there was more up than there was baby, and it was startling; the carpet was not in good condition. It was a mess.

Those of us on the opposite side of the aisle were not in good condition at all. We kept trying to tell the young mother it was just fine. We were handing her tissues and things. (Most of us have been babies.) It was a very loving time, but a mess. The baby was crying, and she looked awful. We couldn't cry, but we looked awful. The mother was so sorry about it.

We landed. The minute we landed, baby was fine: "Dada, Dada." The rest of us were just awful. We began to get off the plane, and we all moved very carefully. I had on a suit, and I was trying to decide whether to burn it or just cut off the sleeve. Have you ever tried to get away from something really unpleasant and it was you? Well that's the way we were. It was really bad.

I looked out of the plane, and there waiting was the young man who had to be Daddy: white slacks, white shirt, white flowers, and a little green paper. I thought, I know what's going to happen. He's going to run to that baby who now looks awful--I mean the hair and the pinafore were dreadful. He's going to run to that baby, get one look, and keep on running, saying, "Not my kid!"

As he ran to the young mother, I wouldn't say she threw the baby at him, but she did kind of leave quickly to go get cleaned up. He picked up that baby, and I watched him as he hugged that baby and

kissed that baby and stroked that baby's hair. He said, "Daddy's baby's come home. Daddy's baby's come home."

I watched them all the way to the luggage claim area. He never stopped kissing that baby. He never stopped welcoming that baby back home. I thought, Where did I ever get the idea that my Father God is less loving than a young daddy in white slacks and white shirt with white flowers and a green paper.

-- Jeannette Clift George, "Belonging and Becoming," Preaching Today, Tape No. 93.