

The Willing Obscurity of the Saints

(February 25, 2024, Glen G. Scorgie)

Scripture Readings: Luke 11:43-44, Luke 14:1, 7-11 & Matthew 6:1-6

SERMON SUMMARY

Many people seem consumed by a need to impress others and be noticed. And we sometimes find these dynamics playing out even amongst Christians. But true Christianity, the kind that Jesus commended, has always been about seeking God's approval alone, rather than this-worldly recognition from our peers. The motivation driving spiritually bankrupt religion is a seething need to be honored and appreciated by others. By contrast, the signature evidence of genuine Christian spirituality is the saints' willingness to embrace obscurity while continuing to serve God faithfully and cheerfully. The saints are able to do so because they truly believe that *God* notices our labors and sacrifices, that he sees all that we are doing for him in secret, and will reward us accordingly in the life to come. So for now, they actually prefer to remain anonymous, to leave all their faith-motivated generosity, their spiritual growth, and their service unacknowledged by others. They live for an audience of One, and find their greater joy and contentment in the privilege of being friends of God while they await their promised future.

GROWING DEEPER (Reflection & Application)

1. What was your main personal takeaway from the message this week?
2. Can you think of an example of what it might mean for a Christian to embrace obscurity?
2. Why do we seek prominence among our peers, and recognition and appreciation from others for our good deeds? What do you think motivates such behavior? What do you think is behind it?
3. Most of us as Christians believe that God is real, and that he sees everything we do for him, regardless of whether others notice or give us credit. We also believe that in the life to come God will reward us for our hidden service. We know these things to be true. But how can these convictions become so *real and important* to us that they actually shape how we live our lives?
4. The great evangelist George Whitefield once noted that the greatest and purest things are always achieved "where no eye sees but God's." Why is it that we are often deeply touched by stories like the story of Ruby Johnston, who served the Lord in faithful obscurity?
5. We know from the Bible that we should think of ourselves as the Lord's *servants*. But the Bible also teaches that it is possible to experience something like *friendship* with God. That sounds amazing. Have you ever had any experience or sense of such friendship? What is that like, and what does it take?
6. It is a good thing to be able to share our joys and accomplishments with our brothers and sisters in Christ, and to have them celebrate our successes with us. At the same time, Jesus warned us against seeking to look superior or bragging about our achievements. How should we differentiate between healthy sharing and unhealthy showing off?