

An Audience of One

When you give to the needy, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.

MATTHEW 6:3-4

Written by Bill Perkins

Once I chased a loose shopping cart
rolling toward a new car.
I caught it just before impact.
The driver watched my athletic rescue
and drove away without a word.

I wanted to call after him:
“You forgot to thank me.”

That moment exposed something in me.
I had done a kindness,
but part of me wanted an audience.

Jesus speaks directly
to that hidden hunger.
He warns us not to practice righteousness
merely to be seen.
(Matthew 6:1)

Some giving is really performing—
a good deed staged for applause.

Jesus is not against visible goodness.
He is not concerned only
with what we give.
He cares about what we hope
to receive in return.

A gift no one applauds.
A need met without our name attached.
A kindness we release
without waiting for a thank-you.
These acts reveal
who our true audience is.

When our kindness goes unnoticed
and disappointment rises,
it may be telling us the truth:
we wanted praise
as much as we wanted to help.

Jesus' strange image makes the point.
It takes two hands to applaud.
If one hand does not know
what the other has done,
neither hand can turn generosity
into a trophy.

Secret kindness is like a seed
beneath the soil:
unseen, but known to God.

Give for the Father's eyes,
and human applause loses its power.
When God is the audience,
kindness no longer needs a spotlight.
His approval is better
than a moment of recognition.

Where do I secretly hope
someone notices my kindness?

God sees what others overlook.
I can give freely,
release the need for applause,
and trust His reward.

Father, purify my motives.
Teach me to give without keeping score,
serve without needing to be seen,
and rest in Your approval.
Let my left hand forget
what my right hand has done.
In Jesus' name. Amen.