

**INTRODUCTION FOR LIVE STREAMING, MAY 2, 2021**  
11:20 Sunday Morning, @ [www.facebook.com/austinvillevcovertchurches](http://www.facebook.com/austinvillevcovertchurches)  
GOOD MORNING! WELCOME TO OUR AUSTINVILLE / COVERT SUNDAY SERVICE.

MAY WE PRAY:

Our Father in Heaven,

Make us instruments of Your peace; where there is hatred, may Your love increase. Lord, make us instruments of Your peace; may walls of pride and prejudice cease. Where there is hatred, we will sow Your love. Where there is injury we will never judge. Where there is striving we will speak Your peace to the people crying for release. We will be Your instruments of peace. Where there is blindness; we will pray for sight. Where there is darkness, we will shine Your light. Where there is sadness, we will bear their grief to the millions crying for release. We will be Your instruments of peace.

~ In the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, AMEN

**Doxology**

Connie Sickler

**INTRODUCTORY REMARKS:**

Services were held for Grace Hewitt Balmer, @ 12 Noon, May 1<sup>st</sup> at Bradford County Memorial Park.

**Cards may be sent to:** William & Linda (Balmer) Hurd, 3056 Robinson Rd. Wellsburg, NY 14894

Services were held for Wendell Chub @ 1 PM, Saturday, May 1<sup>st</sup> at Bradford County Memorial park.

Services for Tim Jennings will be held 11 A.M., Saturday, May 8, at Vickery's in Troy. Burial at Glenwood.

We are saddened to report the deaths of both Harry Brelsford and Charles Babcock of the Old Covert Church. Plans are being made for their respective memorial services. We will publish them on the church Facebook page as soon as they are complete. To Julie and Mallory, we are so sorry –you are in our hearts.

**Cards may be sent to:**

Julie Brelsford 321 Fields Road, Troy, PA 16947; Mallory Babcock 41 Stoney Ledge Lane, Troy, PA 16947

So sorry to learn of the death of Marlene Taylor, Marlene and her husband Bob were great supporters of the building projects at both churches. She is remembered with fond appreciation. **Cards may be sent to:**

Bobbie Jo (Taylor) Thuotte 8575 Old State Road, Troy, PA 16947

Written copies of the pastor's first quarter 2021 report to the church board are available in both entrances.

St. Pauley has now reopened our clothing shed. Great time to think of spring cleaning.

Want to get back to normal and protect the economy? Get your vaccination –things won't be right till you do! Be part of solution; get vaccinated –we're "circling the wagons against this virus. Join the circle. Don't "wait for better," "work for better" –get your shot! Walk-in vaccinations for ages 16 and up are available at the Guthrie Vaccine Clinic at the old Sayre K-Mart -or [www.guthrie.org/vaccine](http://www.guthrie.org/vaccine) or call 866-488-4743 for an appointment. You can find this information on your Live-stream service schedule posted on our facebook today. Can't get there? Let us know. We'll take you.

**Wear your mask, keep physical distanced, wash your hands. Get your vaccine as soon as you can.**

So glad you are here, Alexandra Marple in for Gloria Dziuba at the piano, Gloria at the organ, Gabrielle Fish at the camera, Connie Sickler (leading our singing), some choir members to give us words for our hymns, all of you who have gathered around your devices. We're trying hard to keep you safe. We've come a long way –let's not give up until we're all safe.



## Passing the Motive Test

~ Matthew 6:1-18

"Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them: for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven" (Matthew 6:1).

Jesus was pointing out a real danger, "be careful", "take heed", "beware," he said. Of what danger does Jesus warn? It is not idleness. Of course idleness is a danger; however, the Lord assumes here that everyone who is making a serious effort to be his follower will be a worker. He takes our "good deeds" for granted. He seems to feel that if we are his disciples, we will not choose to be idle or useless. Nor will we avoid contact with the cross and hardship.

Recently, I heard the wife of a Norwegian fisherman being interviewed. When asked to describe the Norwegian people, she said, "Norwegians are basically lazy people, the reason they work so hard is to prove that they are not." I think the same may be true of Christians! Christians are good workers.

"Take heed that you do not your good deed" *for thus and such a reason*. That we are going to do good is assumed as a certainty, for vital Christianity is impossible without sacrificial service. Jesus once told the story of a man who lost both himself and his talent, not because he had grossly misused his talent, but because he had not used it at all. He told of a heart cleansed of evil that became seven times worse, only because of emptiness. Idleness is deadly alright, but it is not the subject of warning here.

***Nor is he warning against open and positive discipleship.*** When he urged secret prayer, he did not, for that reason, condemn public prayer. When he urged giving in a hidden fashion, so that our right hand does not know what our left hand is up to, he was not condemning giving that is seen by the eyes of the world. In fact, in another place he told us that "a city that is set on a hill cannot be hid," and commanded us to "let our light shine before people, that they may see our good works and that our Father in Heaven would thereby be glorified."

So then, what is Christ warning about? The answer is in the text. "Take heed that you do not your good deeds before people, *to be seen of them*." They may, of course, see, but that is only incidental; we would still do it if they were not looking. Jesus is warning against *wrong motive*. He was warning about that subtle temptation that comes to all of us who try to follow him --that of looking to people for praise and approval, rather than keeping our hearts fixed on pleasing him.

***This is what he said: The moral quality of any deed is determined by the motive that gives it birth.***

That goes for praying, preaching, singing, giving, teaching, and so forth. Leave it to us humans to sharpen to a keen edge the skills of pride and the "brag;" we can dress them in a vest and tie and give them a refined respectability. Jesus knew this, so he cautioned us to bring the motive test to bear upon the whole realm of our religious activity.

***Here are the activities mentioned: fasting, giving, and praying:***

First, fasting; though fasting is not prominent in religious life today, it was prominent at one time in the church. Its purpose was the subduing of self; it was intended to make more complete the mastery of the spirit over the body. I think we have lost something here. Now our bodies have taken over. The body wants drugs --we give it drugs. The body wants smoke --we give it smoke. The body wants food --we give it food. The body wants alcohol --we give it alcohol. The body wants sex --we give it sex. Give the body what it wants; the body is in control --the spirit has lost control.

However, fasting in Jesus' day had very little, if any, religious value. People who did it, did it to demonstrate to other people that *they* were religious, superior, spiritual, and were therefore entitled to special applause and status within the religious community. Their point was not so much to subdue their bodies, as to make fasting a statement that said something like, "We are more dedicated, more consecrated, more subdued than others. They were trying to *look spiritual* to other people, and they did. Jesus said that "they had their reward."

Secondly, Jesus went on to say, "When you give (or serve in any way), do not gong the bell." That is, do not give so that other people will know how generous you are; give in order to be helpful.

Thirdly, when you pray, "go into your room," so that other people will not be inclined to applaud you as a great spiritual figure with some special connection to God that no one else enjoys. Do not pray in such a way as to draw attention to yourself. We do not pray because people are listening; we pray because God is listening. Now, we can be quite certain that Jesus was not talking about a literal closet; therefore, it is possible to go to your closet and pray even when you are in a crowd of people. The point here is that of being alone with God, and one may be alone with God in the middle of a crowd.

***What is the danger of giving way to the wrong motive?***

*First*, it poisons the very fountain of life. It makes us wrong in our heart and intention; it makes us wrong at the very center of our being.

*Second*, it is motive that determines the moral quality of a deed. No service can be really good if it comes from a base or sordid motive. We realize this in our dealings with one another. We appreciate that which is done for love's sake; we do not appreciate that which is done for the selfish interest of the one who bestows some good upon us. This is true regardless of how beautiful the deed may be. For example, a kiss is a beautiful something, but no one thinks of the kiss of Judas as beautiful. However, if we did not know the motive behind Judas' kiss, we might think that it was beautiful. Suppose Judas had been loyal and sincere, then his kiss would have gone down as one of the finest deeds in history, rather than one of

the blackest. Motive is the difference.

No deed done from a wrong motive has merit, even though it may be greatly useful. Many thoroughly selfish deeds are useful. Many gifts have been highly useful, even though given selfishly. But utility is not what determines moral value. Remember the cruel deed of Joseph's brothers when they threw him into a pit, then sold him as a slave? By that, Joseph ended up as a ruler in Egypt, living in a palace on the Nile River instead of a nomad's tent. However, no credit was due to his brothers. Joseph said, "You meant it unto me for evil, but God meant it unto good."

*Thirdly*, a wrong motive makes it impossible for God to grant a reward. No credit is given because no credit is deserved. There are those who run past the morality of the New Testament and object to any offer of reward at all; they say, "I don't want a reward, I'm doing this because I'm kind, generous, and loving. Yet, Jesus does not hesitate to speak of, and to give rewards.

The reward for a garden is food. The reward for work is pay and accomplishment. The reward for hunting is game. The reward for honesty is trust. The reward for study is knowledge, and so on. Jesus said, there is a reward to those who will serve for loves' sake.

Most children work for the approval of their parents. I certainly did, and I was disappointed when I failed to receive it. One of my favorite high school teachers was Mr. Phil Brennan. I always did well in his class; however, in my final semester at *Mansfield High School* I let off my studies and nearly failed trigonometry. Mr. Brennan was disappointed, and I was disappointed, for I had let him down. I have always been pleased when I have been able to please.

So then, perhaps our greatest reward from God will be hearing him say, "Well done, you have been a good and faithful servant." But the selfish servant will not hear those words. They already have what they wanted they have the applause of men.

***How are we to "take heed?" How are we to rid ourselves of these wrong motives that tend to ruin even the best and noblest of our deeds?*** We are not to do it by continually questioning our motives. We are not going to get it done by persistently and morbidly subjecting ourselves to examination. It is possible to push self-scrutiny too far. It is possible to become a spiritual-invalid by always thinking there is something wrong with us. We should not become spiritual-hypochondriacs. "Oh, I'm so bad --so evil."

Still, it is good now and then to face facts about ourselves. How about our motives? Suppose we make a test?

First, do we stop our good deeds when the credit stops?

Second, do we work so long as we are the chairperson of the group and quit when another takes our place?

Thirdly, Do we attend church only so long as we are warmly greeted, and quit if someone fails to say, "hello?" In such cases we ought to be careful, for our deeds are more likely born from a selfish motive.

***But, what is the cure?*** Right motive comes when Jesus comes. Jesus said, "You must have me; without me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). "You must have me; for if you have me, then you will have love." Love is enough to give us a proper motive. No deed, however great, is of moral merit without love.

Love must be the motive. Even where the deed fails, there is credit and value if love is the motive. David wanted to build a house for God; he didn't build it because he couldn't build it. David was, God said, "A man of war" –and that was not the disposition needed to build a house of peace and worship. You don't build God's kingdom by war. But God said, "You did well that it was in your heart."

Sometimes people intend well; and it is intention that is important. We are rarely condemned for our weakness or inability, but we are for our motive. Motive is of far greater moral value than deed or ability. On the one hand I can give all my goods to feed the poor and my body to be burned, but without love there is no profit. However, if I give just a cup of cold water with love, I am enriched forever. It is love that God wants; it is love that people want.

God said, "Son give me your heart" (Proverbs 23:26). Everything without love leaves us poor, but if we have love and nothing else, we are rich. That is the cry of the human heart. That is the cry of the heart of our Lord. If you want to leave an inheritance to the world when you die, let that inheritance be love.

Therefore, "Take heed that you do not do your good deeds before people, to be seen of them: otherwise you have no reward of your Father which is in Heaven."

You would be surprised; people are not half as interested in *how well* you can do something, as they are in *why* you do it.

**Here is the summation: None of us are the best, but everyone of us can do what we do for the best reason.**

***The reason must be love, for God is love.***