

**Victory of the Lamb – Influencers – Matthew 6:1-6 –
Not Outward Appearance vs Inward Peace - January 22, 2023 - Pastor Bill Limmer**

Not always but almost always, when a player in the NFL scores a touchdown, that player loses his mind. The player runs around like a chicken with its head cut off, or he breaks out into the latest dance moves, or he runs to the camera to strike a pose. It is like the player is doing something that has never been before. Seemingly forgetting that to score a touchdown is one of the main goals of the game that he is likely getting paid millions to play. And apparently forgetting that football is a team sport, meaning that the reason he scored was because a number of his teammates were doing their jobs too. Can you imagine this in other occupations? I mean what would it be like if you went to Target and the clerk having completed the transaction of the person in front of you, ran across the store in her khaki pants and red shirt, and stood in front of the Starbucks counter with her arms crossed waiting to be acknowledged. I mean what would you think if you went to Starbucks and when the barista completed the order of the person in front of you, she jumped the counter with her green Starbucks apron shouting and screaming, dancing, and stood with her arms crossed and stood beside you with her arms crossed waiting to be acknowledged by you. Can you imagine what that would be like here at church if Phil who is on the camera today made a clutch camera view switch, and he jumps over the tech counter and comes running to the front, arms flailing because he nailed it.

Today we are continuing our series **Influencers**, and today's teaching topic on how to influence the people of the world is not through outward appearance but inward peace. By the time we end today we want to see **How do we get inner peace that influences others?**

Here is the thing, everyone, and everyone means everyone, deals with pride. The thing with pride is it so easy to see in others and so hard to see in ourselves. That's a problem. If we spot pride in someone else, don't we reveal our own pride in judging it to be in some else. Here is what happens so often: we criticize others because they are not doing the things we would. And when we do that, we are see ourselves and our ways and our perspective to be the standard that people need to measure up too or they become targets of our criticism.

Here is an example of self-righteous pride. Luke 18:9ff - ⁹**To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable:** ¹⁰**"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' ¹³"But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' ¹⁴"I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."**-The Pharisee is having the typical NFL touchdown celebration. Can you imagine standing next to that guy? Sometimes it is actually worse, because sometimes we are that guy. When we have self-righteous pride we

do things to get the praise of others based on our outward appearance. And when we do that we are that guy.

Let's see: Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount, **6 "Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. 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 others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 3 But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. 5 "And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 6 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.**

Are we living for the glory of God or for the glory we will get from others? We will do the exact same things but our motivation will be different.



The word hypocrite means actor. In the old Greek theater one person would play many roles. The changes of roles was noted by the mask the actor was wearing. Hypocrisy is when we try to show that we are righteous by our own actions instead of the actions of Jesus.

In the book Pursuit of Holiness by Jerry Bridges the author writes, "As we grow in the Christian life we face increasing danger of spiritual pride. We know the correct doctrines, the right methods, and the proper do's and don'ts. But we may not see the poverty of our own spiritual character. We may not see our critical and unforgiving spirit, our habit of backbiting, or our tendency to judge others. "you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked' (Revelation 3:17)."

Trying to live right in God's sight isn't bad. Being obedient to God's word isn't bad. Slander is bad, Gossip is bad. Condemning someone because he or she is different from us is bad. That is

spiritual pride and that is sin. And that is why so many outside of Christianity say that Christians are judgmental and hypocrites. And that is why, sometimes they are right.

I want to share with you a caution. Low self-esteem, anxiety, and depression can also be a form of false piety and pride. Low self-esteem, anxiety, and depression are not the opposite of pride. They are more like cousins to pride. Low self-esteem, anxiety, and depression cloud our vision and the result is that we view others as less committed, less dedicated, loving God less and one's self more. We adopt this view of others by comparing them to ourselves as the standard and there is the pride. Have you ever done this? I have. It's a horrible spiritual malady that threatens to quench the Holy Spirit in our lives and in the lives of others.

Jesus assumes that we will have acts of righteousness after all he prepared good works for us to do so how do we do these things not to bring attention to ourselves but to glorify God.

Matthew 5:16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

And how do we do that – remember how God saved you and that will bring you inner peace. You see the reality is that the sin we are saved from is more horrible than any of us truly get. The Scriptures are clear that the reality and power of sin makes every human being in place deep dark hopelessness without God. **Romans 3:19 says, Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.** The wages of sin is death. It is a chain that restrains us from God. Sin is a chain that we cannot break. Another way of looking at it is that we are in the boat being pushed by the current away from God, away from heaven, to Satan and to hell. And we don't have a paddle. Because of our sins sometimes we are rightfully frightened by this prospect and sometimes we actually enjoy the ride away from God.

So how do we get out of that boat that is on a collision course of condemnation? We can't/ Only God can rescue us. In humility and love Jesus lived his entire life without pride and died on the cross to pay the sin debt price for our pride. The demands and expectation of righteousness cannot be confused with forms of external piety; the righteousness that pleases God the Father is given to us by the work of Jesus not our work. Jesus always, always, followed his Father's will to fulfill all righteousness not only for himself but for you and me since we don't. And Jesus gives us credit for what he did!

Ephesians 2:8,9 says **For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.** Faith is a gift from God. Faith in God, by nature, looks away from ourselves to God. Faith gives us the inner peace to live our lives trusting in God. When you are trusting in God, you are not boasting in yourself. When you are trusting in God you can have inner peace. Faith is what my granddaughter exhibited when she was out hiking with her parents. She was happy to be held in her father's arms. She is receiving that love, is comforted by that love, and is secure in that love. She has peace. Inner peace.

So, we are saved in such a way that we can only boast in the Lord. We are saved in such a way that God's grace shines brightly. It is not about our show but for God's glow.

So let's get hyper practical. We are to do righteous acts. We are to give to those in need. Jesus said, "when you give." When we give, are not to call attention to ourselves. We don't do a mercy touchdown dance. We give to those in need because first God gave to us. So, we are able to meet someone's need in inner peace because God met our need. We give to those in need because God first loved us and gave to us.

Jesus expects that we will pray. And know that Jesus is not condemning public prayer. Jesus prayed in public and in private. The early church was all messed up. When you pray, pray for the glory of God. Not to draw attention to yourself. Here are some questions that you can consider: do I enjoy praying more when I am alone or in public? Do I love my quiet time in prayer with God? Is my public prayer, simply an overflow of my private prayer? Are we more concerned with bringing our heart to God or how we sound before other people?

Individualism says, "look at me and what I am doing." Influencing the world from a place of inner peace says, "let me show you God by what I do."

Because you are righteous because of Jesus righteousness and not your own, you have inner peace. **When you give or your pray or whatever righteous act you do, you can do it to celebrate Jesus' victory in your life and that is inner peace.** And that will influence people in Jesus' name.