

## The Sin of Self-worship – Matthew 6:5-15

**Introduction:** Sobering words of Matthew 7:21-23. Jesus warns about getting on the “wrong train.” Life is about the destination and the wrong train will not get you there! Moving backwards through the sermon, Jesus shows you how to identify the “right train.”

**Transition to passage:** Two possibilities exist to identify the right way. Evaluate the things you do (which Jesus also did) or evaluate the motivation behind what you do. Jesus addresses motivation. Which tells us that hypocrites can do the same thing authentic followers of Christ can do. Jesus’ point is that just because someone does those things does not guarantee authenticity. **Illustration:** Fan vs. spectator in team apparel.

Just as giving is at the heart of good works, prayer is at the heart of worship. Cf. John 4:21-24.

The determinative factor of true worship centers on motivation. *Misplaced motivation exalts self over God.* The passage addresses two flaws revealing self-worship. First, self-worship focuses on externals (5-6). Second, self-worship attempts manipulation (7-15).

Problem 1: The sin of self-worship focuses on externals (5)

- ✪ **Externals alone fail to authenticate worship** (nothing wrong with the externals themselves, just basing your final assessment on what someone does or how they feel about it. ILL: People down at the “altar” being pious while deeply involved in sin.)
- ✪ **Ungodly motives often drive external practices** (Phil. 1:15 – even preaching Christ out of envy and rivalry; that does not make preaching Christ wrong)
- ✪ **Ungodly motives devalue external practices** (if the motive is to be seen by others, it will be forgotten by God)

Remedy: True worship fixes attention of the Father (6)

- ✪ **Fixed attention on the Father sets self aside** (when your worship focuses on God alone, you experience freedom to serve those around you. What they think no longer dominates your priorities)
- ✪ **Fixed attention on the Father accepts the value of the Father’s omnipresence** (losing the potential attention of millions to gain the full attention of the Creator of billions)
- ✪ **Fixed attention on the Father reaps lasting rewards** (coming before God to submit myself to Him and ask Him for my deepest needs yields a far greater harvest than a pat on the back)
- ✪ **Fixed attention on the Father allows for true worship in spirit and in truth** (cf. John 4:23-24)

Practical applications to fix your attention on the Father

- ✪ **Spend much time with the Father through the revealed truth of His Word** (Psalm 119:105)
- ✪ **Prioritize your life around the things that fit you to stand before the Lord** – Replacing opportunities for spiritual growth with fellow believers will not stand well before the Lord
- ✪ **Prepare to worship** (Ecclesiastes 5:1-7) – Especially Saturday evenings – Pray, read Scripture, get stuff ready
- ✪ **Think in advance how you might encourage one person for the glory of God** (2 Thess. 3:9-10)
- ✪ **Isolate areas where you want people to see you and avoid them!**

**Conclusion:** Jesus gives you the tools to evaluate your worship today. Are you on the right train? Will your worship be accepted because you fixed your attention on the Father? Ultimately, true worship comes only when you turn from your self-worship to Jesus Christ in repentance. At that moment God justifies you, no longer counting your sin of self-worship against you, and through Christ liberates you to fix your attention on God alone! Don’t be like this tourist:

*A few years ago, I decided to visit my sister who was living in France. I assumed that most French would speak English. I found that many people spoke only their own language and this included the ticket inspector on the train. He punched my ticket, then chatted cordially for a bit, making several expansive gestures. I simply nodded from time to time to show him that I was interested. When he had gone, an American tourist, also on the train, leaned forward and asked if I spoke French. 'No', I admitted.' Then that explains', she said, 'why you didn't bat an eyelid when he told you that you were on the wrong train.'*

Being accustomed to the dialect of the world leaves you deaf to the instruction of Scripture – “sluggish of hearing”