

Isaiah: A Prophet for Our Time
The Hypocrisy of Self-Serving Piety
Isaiah 58:1-14

Much of what passes for spirituality among religious people is little more than religious ritual and rite of passage. To be fair, God designed a certain amount of ritual and repetition to be built into worship, service, and devotion. But outward action or participation in God-ordained activities of worship and spiritual discipline was always intended to be done with hearts of faith, flowing out of a grace already experienced.

1. Piety is designed to make much of Jesus.

2. Piety is designed to help us love others.

3. Piety is designed to help us delight in God.

God has given us the spiritual disciplines so that we might grow in a grace already received. We need to resist the temptation to think of the disciplines and piety as tools for earning God's favor. Instead, things like fasting are given to us by God to help us live out the great Commandment: to love Him and to love others. Only when we have the proper view of piety and right perspective on religious ritual can we expect to enter into the rest that Christ offers.

Reflection

How does Isaiah 58 challenge us to live in ways that fulfill the Great Commandment to love God and to love others? How could the discipline of fasting help you in your walk with God? How do you think fasting helps us make much of Jesus? If you fasted with us during the season of Lent, did you find that you were more aware of the needs of others, or did the fast just make you more aware of your own need and desire for food? How would participation in the spiritual disciplines beyond fasting help you delight more in God and less in yourself? What needs to change in your everyday routine in order for you to be able to grow in grace through the spiritual disciplines of fasting, prayer, Bible reading and memorization? If you are not doing these things, why not?