

**Title:** The Christian Moral Life (3): Our Hidden Life in Christ  
**Date:** 20 August 2017  
**Occasion:** SSMC Sunday Worship  
**Text:** Mat 6; Col 3:1-4

1. **Introduction: “The Christian Moral Life”**

Sermon 1: The 10 Commandments

Sermon 2: The Beatitudes—Defining character

- Character is important, not just law-keeping
- The Beatitudes inverts the world’s value  
READ the 8 Beatitudes
- Note (i): All traditional cultures have all valued character.  
But modern society has privileged worldly success and celebrity status over character and moral virtues.  
Note (ii): Character is not something you can buy, borrow or lend. On the Last Day, we all stand before naked with nothing except our character. What will everyone see?

Sermon 3: Mat 6 deals with many important matters. E.g. 6:33

- No time to deal with all the details
- But one theme that comes across clearly is our “Hidden Life” in Christ!

2. **The Hidden Life in Christ**

i. *Introducing the theme*

Recent funeral service of the STM Assist Librarian:

- Neither h & w are very impressive by the world’s standard; wife died of cancer
- One of the eulogies given by a C-grade student tells of how he was encouraged by the couple to finish the course
- I stood rebuke because faculty members are usually only concerned with the students’ grades. But we often fail to do enough to help them when they struggle academically. Someone unknown and unimportant was doing better than me pastorally & spiritually!
- Point: Often the most effective persons are the silent people who appear unimportant, but who go about quietly doing God’s work effectively! And they do not draw attention to themselves. They do it simply because it is the right thing to do, because it is Christ-like to do so!

ii. *The call to the hidden life*

The theme of hiddenness runs through Mat 6

a. vv. 1-4; Alms-giving

- READ
- Fund-raising in Chinese churches and CSR mock-cheques

But what is good for Corporate CSR is not necessary good for your spiritual life!

- Note v.2d esp. “they have received their reward already”

b. vv.5-6; Prayer

- READ & Explain
- E.g. the monastic tradition;  
Cf. the *starets* in the Russian Orthodox Church during the period of persecution under Marxism: “It is to the starets more than anything that the Russian Orthodox Church owes its enormous staying-power.” (M Bourdeaux, 1983, p. 74.)
- Note again, “they have their reward already”

c. vv.7-15; The Lord’s Prayer

- Not empty phrases & many words!  
Cf. Elijah and the priests of Baal at Mt Carmel in 1 Kings 18 where the priests of Baal shouted and prayed from morning till evening prayer time!  
Contrast the simplicity of Elijah’s prayer in 1 Kings 18:36f!
- vv. 8-13; model of simplicity in prayer
- vv. 14f; forgiveness and unforgiveness wherein the theme of hiddenness comes through again!  
Only God and you knows whether you have truly forgiven.

d. vv. 16-17; Fasting

- READ & Explain
- Don’t flaunt your fasting and tell everyone! E.g. 40 days

e. vv.19-21, 24; Where is your treasure?

- READ & Explain
- vv. 19-21; True treasure is hidden in God!
- v. 24; Same theme!  
Who is your Master? Money that can be seen or God who cannot be seen?
- What is it that really drives you?

f. vv. 25-34; Security

- Where is the ultimate source of your security?
- We are anxious about earthly cares, and daily things: bank accounts, investments, old-age provisions, insurance, degrees and titles, etc.  
All these are visible!
- Or is our true security in God who is unseen?

3. **Drawing the threads together**

Allow me to draw some clear themes together

i. *Hiddenness: “Your life in hidden with Christ in God”*

a. Jesus speaks about some of the basic things in our spiritual life: alms or tithes, prayer, fasting, treasure, security and dependence, etc.  
He puts a simple question to us: What reward do you seek? The world's or God's?  
Similarly: Where is our ultimate security or on whom do you depend? On human resources and the world's power, or on God?

b. Col 3: 1-4  
READ and explain

c. This brings us back to the basic questions: Whose reward do we seek? And on whom do we depend for our security?

[1] You want the world's reward, you have got it!  
But if that's what you seek, that all you will get!  
(It is a frightening prospect on the Day of judgement! Some of those who are most highly acclaimed church leaders will be told that exactly that!)

[2] On what do you depend? On human resources or on God's?  
Two examples:  
• Sung and China: It will NOT be a work of man but of God!  
• Kimbangu

ii. *The Christian moral life*

a. Character is sometimes defined as what you do in the dark or when no one is looking!  
Note: The theme of hiddenness again!  
Point: Character is about YOU naked before God! What will everyone see?

b. Christian character and the spirit of the Age we live in:  
There were times in the past when moral character and virtues were sought after and valued. But the world today rarely bothers.

[1] What matters is worldly success and celebrity status.  
We are encouraged to flaunt our successes and achievements: degrees, titles, offices held, positions attained, power of influence, even our spirituality!  
Examples: "...achievement in evangelism is unequal among women in the world!"  
This is the spirit of this age!  
And Jesus said: "You have your reward already!"

[2] Unfortunately this has also been true of the church  
Is not the focus on megachurches today another example of this?  
Note: I am not against the growth of the church.  
But historically many churches have grown wonderfully without the megachurch! So what so great about it?

In our pursuit for worldly success and glory, we forget the negative side of the megachurch: weakness of discipleship, financial accountability, abuse of power, and lack of long-term sustainability!

- c. Summing-up: The Christian moral life challenges us to live our life hidden in Christ! Not to flaunt our degrees, human achievements & our successes in the world, our spiritual gifts and accomplishments in the spiritual realms, the depth of our spirituality and the quality of our prayer life, etc.

Rather it challenges us to:

- Live and act modestly and humbly in whatever we do
- Avoid all self-promotion and self-advertisement, especially those based on false claims: e.g. just look at the way some preachers promote themselves; or think of those who claim for themselves titles like apostle or prophet, etc.
- Not to seek title and degrees for their own sake: e.g. Don't seek degrees just for self-aggrandisement
- Learn to live a life hidden in Christ! (Remember Smith Wigglesworth's story!"

This brings me to the final point for this sermon ...

- iii. *Why are there so few in our world today that demonstrate true spiritual greatness in our midst?*

We need more and more of those who are

- Great evangelists and teachers
- Prophets and healers with powerful giftings
- Spiritual leadership to provide the church with clear directions
- Etc.

We need more and not less!

But the way forward is to learn to live a life hidden in Christ!

Will you begin to take up this challenge!