

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MARCH 28TH-29TH, 2020 // BOOK OF MATTHEW

JUDGMENT (MATTHEW 7:1-6)

In His "sermon on the mount", Jesus explains for His disciples the kind of righteousness they must have to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

- This kind of righteousness is received from God as a gift, it transforms our hearts, and it then outwardly manifests to every area of our life.
- Not only that, it looks drastically different than the religious self-righteousness that humanity often tries to pass off as true piety.

Jesus continues to contrast the true righteousness that He gives with the self-righteousness of religious hypocrisy in chapter 7.

- The most obvious symptom of a proud, self-righteous heart is hypocritical judgmentalism.
- This is an attitude where we judge the sins and behaviors of others in a harsh, critical manner but we give ourselves a lot of grace and see ourselves as morally superior.

"JUDGE NOT, THAT YOU BE NOT JUDGED" (VS. 1)

- The tense of this verb "judged" signifies a final judgment that we will all face.
- When we're self-righteous, we "play God" as we condemn and criticize other people, yet we seldom consider the reality that one day God will judge us.
- We have to be very careful with our criticism & condemnation of other people- we don't see them as God does.

This is possibly the most misunderstood and misquoted passages in all of the Bible!

- Jesus is not making a blanket statement against discernment and making judgment calls in our lives.
- A person who believes everything they hear and accepts everyone who claims to be spiritual will experience confusion and tremendous loss.
- Jesus is instructing us to not judge in a self-righteous, prideful, and hypocritical way.
- "With the judgment you pronounce you will be judged..." (vs. 2)
- God is going to judge us at the end, but in this life people are also going to judge us.
- If we are harsh in our criticism of other people, we will receive from people exactly what we give. The kind of judgment and the measure of judgment we give comes right back to us- we reap what we sow!

SPECKS & LOGS (VS. 3-5)

- Jesus was a carpenter (Mark 6:3), so He uses a very familiar word picture to illustrate the importance of dealing with our own sin before trying to point out the sins in others.
- Why do we notice the specks in eyes of others when we can't see the log in our eye?
- The answer is in the question- we can't see clearly to help others when there's sin in our own lives.

In using the word, "brother", Jesus had the Christian community in mind.

- Our communities are to be places of accountability and honesty where we love each other enough to help each other with our sin.
- But in order to do that effectively- we have to first see our own sins as "logs" and the sins of others as "specks".

THE NECESSITY OF JUDGMENT (VS. 6)

- "Dogs" & "pigs" most likely represent those who are wild and unclean, and are active enemies to the gospel of the Kingdom.
- Jesus tells us to use discernment when we share truth ("pearls") with others.
- We're to be discerning as far as we can tell to the state of someone's heart before we share truth with them- those who aren't receptive to it may even "trample" or "attack" us.

ASK, SEEK, KNOCK (MATTHEW 7:7-11)

It seems a bit non sequitur for Jesus to discuss prayer at this point in His message.

- But if we think about His idea in verse 6 about using discernment in dealing with others, and His message in verses 3-5 about dealing with our sin and helping others with theirs- it actually fits well.
- How is that we best practice discernment? We pray and receive wisdom from God.

James 1:5 tells us that if any of us lack wisdom, we're to ask God and He will give it "generously without finding fault".

- What we need more than physical provision is the perspective and wisdom of God so we can rightly order our lives in a way that pleases Him.

- How do we receive that discernment, wisdom, and heavenly perspective? We "ask", "seek", and "knock" (vs. 7-8).

All three of these words refer to the same kinds of activity of petitioning the Father.

- They're in the present tense- "keep on asking and it will be given to you..." - it communicates to us the importance and necessity of constantly and persistently seeking God and His will in our lives through prayer.
- Jesus' promise is that if we ask, we will receive- God will give us good things!

SNAKES & ROCKS (VS. 9-10)

- God isn't some kind of sneaky trickster or cosmic killjoy that gives us terrifying substitutes for what's best for us.
- He doesn't withhold what's best from us as a way of stringing us along and getting us to trust Him just to abandon us or strike us down.
- When we picture God this way, we tend to not trust Him or give ourselves wholly to Him.

EVEN EVIL PARENTS GIVE GOOD GIFTS (VS. 11).

- Human parents, even at their best, are "evil" in comparison with the love, holiness, and perfection of the Father.
- God the Father gives "good things" to those who ask Him!
- So we're to constantly be "asking, seeking, and knocking" for every need we have from our perfect Father who loves us.

Is there a promise in this passage that God will give us everything we ask for specifically how we ask for it?

- No- only that the Father would give, "good things" (vs. 11).
- Because a good parent answers their children according to wisdom, not a child's limited understanding of their own needs.
- But we must trust that the Father knows what we need more than we do!

THE GOLDEN RULE (MATTHEW 7:12)

Roman Emperor Alexander Severus (A.D. 222-35) was not a Christian, but he was so impressed by this maxim of Jesus that he did something incredible with it.

- He inscribed it in gold on the wall of his chamber, thus identifying this teaching as the "Golden Rule".
- This is a guide to good living and love that is universally recognized as the standard.

This verse is often quoted, yet it's seldom applied.

- It's a simple yet profound principle to guide us in how we treat others.
- It's not a sum total of Christian truth or God's plan of redemption.
- Warren Wiersbe- "We should no more build our theology on the Golden Rule than we should our astronomy on "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star".

The person who actually takes this teaching serious and practices it refuses to do or say anything to others that would be harmful to themselves.

- Practicing this principle releases the love of God in our lives and enables us to help others, even when they might want to hurt us.
- If we're willing to truly practice this teaching, it's going to come at a cost.

The cost is our own pride and our desire to be right.

- It's the cost of our own personal wants, desires, comforts, and maybe even necessities.
- We have to be willing to lay down our rights, and put the needs of others before our own.
- We have to be willing to be sacrificial, humble, kind, generous, and patient with others- because that's what we all need others to be with us.

THE PROBLEM IS...

- We want others to be patient with us, but we don't want to have to wait on them.
- We want others to show grace towards us, but we want them to pay when they wrong us.
- We want others to sacrifice for us, but we don't want to give up the things we want.
- We want others to be understanding to us, but we tend to criticize others harshly.

But when we truly and genuinely treat others as we would like to be treated, we're fulfilling the law of God (vs. 12b) when it comes to how to relate to other people.

- "Do not to your neighbor what is hateful to you, this is the whole Torah; the rest is commentary" (R. Hillel). We love people because we're loved richly and fully by God.

The Heart of Father God (Ps. 103:8-9) Children Look Like Their Father (1 John 4:19).

When we are **judgmental, critical, unforgiving, accusing, and cruel** towards other people, we are operating in the demonic and look just Satan. But when we're **gracious, kind, merciful, slow to anger, generous, understanding, and compassionate** towards other people, we look like God the Father.