

Matthew 7 – Having a discerning life built on the Rock!

THEME: *The relationship of the child of the King with other children of the King maintained by prayer; and final warnings about the two ways, false prophets, false profession, and the two foundations.*

Judging Others

Mat 7:1 *"Judge not, that you be not judged.*

Mat 7:2 *For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.*

These verses have really been misunderstood. To judge can mean "to decide, to distinguish, to condemn, to avenge," and it actually can mean "to damn." These verses do not mean that a child of God is forbidden to judge others, but it does mean that we are not to judge the inward motives of others in the sense of condemning them. We do not know or understand why a brother in Christ does a certain thing. We see only outward acts. God doesn't forbid our judging wrong and evil actions, as we will see. The point is that if you are harsh in your judgments of others, you will be known as the type of person who is severe in his considerations of others. I know this type of person, and I am sure you do, also. Perhaps somebody has said to you, "Don't pay any attention to what he says; he never has a good word to say." You see, he is being judged by the way he judges. This is what our Lord is saying in these verses. – McGee

Mat 7:3 *And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?*

He is comparing a little piece of sawdust in your brother's eye to the great big redwood log in your own eye. The "log" is the spirit of criticism and prejudice. With that blocking your vision, you are in no position to judge the little sin of another. - McGee

Mat 7:4 *Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye?*

Mat 7:5 *Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.*

This matter of harsh judgment is certainly something about which we need to be very careful. Although Jesus makes it clear that we are not to sit in harsh judgment upon another, He also said that by their fruits we would know them. The late Dr. James McGinley put it in his rather unique fashion, "I am no judge, but I am a fruit inspector." And we can really tell whether or not a Christian is producing fruit.

Mat 7:6 *"Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.*

We have to determine who the dogs are and who the pigs are, don't we? These are not four-legged animals He is talking about. We are not to give that which is holy unto dogs or cast our pearls before swine; therefore, there is a judgment that we need to make.

There are certain times and places where it is not worthwhile to say a word. This is a judgment you need to make. I remember a Tennessee legislator friend of mine who was a heavy drinker. He was wonderfully converted and is a choice servant of God today. The other members of the legislature knew how he drank. Then they heard he "got religion," as they called it. One day this fellow took his seat in the legislature, and his fellow-members looked him over. Finally, someone rose, addressed the chairman of the meeting, and said, "I make a motion that we hear a sermon from Deacon So-and-So." Everyone laughed. But my friend was equal to the occasion. He got to his feet and said, "I'm sorry, I do not have anything to say. My Lord told me not to cast my pearls before swine." He sat down, and they never ridiculed him anymore.

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A police inspector in the city of New York told me about certain apartments which were filled with no one but homosexuals. He told me, "They know I'm a Christian, and when they are brought into the station, they say to me 'Preach us a sermon!' But I never cast my pearls before swine." He looked at me and said, "I guess you think I'm a little hard-boiled, but I was a flatfoot in that area, and I know those folk. I worked with them for years."

May I say to you, there are swine and there are dogs in our society. What are we to do? Jesus tells us that we are not to judge, and then He tells us we are to judge. Well, He tells us in the next verse what we are to do.

Not throwing pearls before swine many times means being able to read the room, understand the tone, and sense the sincerity of the person or the lack of. Both Jesus and Joseph when falsely accused did not speak in their defense possibly for this very reason. How do we do this?

Ask, and It Will Be Given

Mat 7:7 "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

Mat 7:8 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

How to meet the people of this world is the greatest problem facing a child of God. Every day we rub shoulders with princes and paupers, gentlemen and scoundrels, true and false professors. Some folk need our friendship and help, and we need them, and we ought to pull them to our hearts. Others are rascals and will destroy us, and we need to push them from us. How are we to know? To ask, seek, and knock definitely refers to this problem. These verses can be used for other situations also, but it is this situation that they have primary reference to.

While I was a pastor in downtown Los Angeles for twenty-one years, I met people from all walks of life. It took me thirty minutes to drive from my home to the church, and during that time I would tell the Lord I was going to meet some new people during the day and would ask Him to please tell me how I should act with each one. Some people would need my help, but others might try to put a knife in my back. You would be surprised how many times I have been fooled by people. Isn't it interesting that Peter, in the early church, knew Ananias and Sapphira were lying (Act_5:1-11)? I can never tell when someone is lying. I do not have the spiritual discernment that they had in the early church. I believe it is a gift that only some people have today, and it is important to make discernment a matter of prayer. **When you meet new friends, do you ever ask God to make it clear to you how to treat them? I have found out that it is a good idea to do this.**

The next verses go on to say that God wants to help you in these matters. - McGee

Mat 7:9 Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?

Mat 7:10 Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent?

Mat 7:11 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!

7:9, 10 When the conditions for prayer are met, the Christian can have utter confidence that God will hear and answer. This assurance is based on the character of God, our Father. On the human level, we know that if a son asks for bread, his father will not give him a stone. Neither would he give him a serpent if he had asked for a fish. An earthly father would neither deceive his hungry son nor give him anything that might inflict pain.

7:11 The Lord argues from the lesser to the greater. If human parents reward their children's requests with what is best for them, how much more will our Father who is in heaven do so. – Believers' Bible Commentary

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The Golden Rule

Mat 7:12 *Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.*

Mat 7:13 *"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.*

Mat 7:14 *Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.*

All right, when you meet somebody new, how are you going to treat him? You don't know—you are not to judge—but if he is a dog or a swine, you had better know. You have to beware of phonies today. So what do you do? Make it a matter of prayer. "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." This is the principle on which you should operate. "Therefore" is the most important word in the Golden Rule. It relates the Golden Rule to that which precedes it. That is, it postulates it on prayer. It all comes together in one package. Don't lift out the Golden Rule and say that you live by it. Understand what the Lord is talking about. Only as we "ask, seek, and knock" are we able to live in the light of the Golden Rule. – McGee

The immediate connection of verse 12 with the preceding seems to be this: since our Father is a giver of good things to us, we should imitate Him in showing kindness to others. The way to test whether an action is beneficial to others is whether we would want to receive it ourselves. The "Golden Rule" had been expressed in negative terms at least one hundred years before this time by Rabbi Hillel. However, by stating the rule in positive terminology, Jesus goes beyond passive restraint to active benevolence. Christianity is not simply a matter of abstinence from sin; it is positive goodness.

This saying by Jesus is the Law and the Prophets, that is, it summarizes the moral teachings of the Law of Moses and the writings of the Prophets of Israel. The righteousness demanded by the OT is fulfilled in converted believers who thus walk according to the Spirit (Rom_8:4). If this verse were universally obeyed, it would transform all areas of international relationships, national politics, family life, and church life. – Believers' Bible Commentary

A Tree and Its Fruit

Mat 7:15 *"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.*

Mat 7:16 *You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles?*

Israel was warned against false prophets, and the church is warned against false teachers, but both classes come in sheep's clothing. "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction" (2Pe_2:1). We are to recognize them by their fruits. That is what we are to watch for in their lives. - McGee

Mat 7:17 *Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.*

Mat 7:18 *A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.*

You will know them by their fruits. Their licentious lives and destructive teachings betray them. A tree or plant produces fruit according to its character. Thornbushes cannot bear grapes; thistles do not bear figs. A good tree bears good fruit and a bad tree bears bad fruit. This principle is true in the natural world and in the spiritual world. The life and teaching of those who claim to speak for God should be tested by the Word of God: "If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa_8:20). – Believers' Bible Commentary

Mat 7:19 *Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.*

Mat 7:20 *Therefore by their fruits you will know them.*

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The destiny of the false prophets is to be thrown into the fire. The doom of false teachers and prophets is “swift destruction” (2Pe_2:1). They can be known by their fruits. – Believers Bible Commentary

I Never Knew You

Mat 7:21 *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.*

You can run around and mouth about living by the Golden Rule, but the point is: Are you doing the will of the Father in heaven? If you are doing His will, you'll come to Christ, recognizing that you need a Savior.

Mat 7:22 *Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'*

Mat 7:23 *And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'*

On judgment day when unbelievers stand before Christ (Rev_20:11-15), many will remind Him that they prophesied, or cast out demons, or performed many wonders—all in His name. But their protestation will be in vain. Jesus will declare to them that He never knew them or acknowledged them as His own.

From these verses we learn that not all miracles are of divine origin and that not all miracle workers are divinely accredited. A miracle simply means that a supernatural power is at work. That power may be divine or satanic. Satan may empower his workers to cast out demons temporarily, in order to create the illusion that the miracle is divine. He is not dividing his kingdom against itself in such a case, but is plotting an even worse invasion of demons in the future. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Obviously, these verses do not refer to believers today. Every believer, living or dead, will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. None will hear the Lord say, “depart from me.” This passage has particular reference to the Great Tribulation period and the Millennium. This is the place to suggest that the Sermon on the Mount will have a particular meaning for the remnant during the Great Tribulation.

Also, there is a needed warning here for professing church members—in fact, for all believers. Folk talk enthusiastically about certain so-called miracle workers today, and they say to me, “You can tell God is with them.” In light of these verses, can we be sure of that? The name of Christ is on the lips of many people who are leaders of cults and “isms.” Just to use the name of Christ and the Bible is not proof that a system is genuine. It is not the outward profession but the inward relationship to a crucified but living Savior that is all-important. - McGee

Build Your House on the Rock

Mat 7:24 *"Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock:*

Mat 7:25 *and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.*

If you have come to Christ, He is the foundation—“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1Co_3:11). When you are resting on Christ, you can build on that foundation. By yielding to the Holy Spirit, you can build a life which the Bible likens to gold, silver, and precious stones.

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Mat 7:26 *"But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand:*

Mat 7:27 *and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."*

What is that sand? It is human goodness and human effort. It is the old weakness of the flesh. My friend, I say to you that you need something better than the flesh has to offer. – McGee

If a person lives according to the principles of the Sermon on the Mount, the world calls him a fool; Jesus calls him a wise man. The world considers a wise man to be someone who lives by sight, who lives for the present, and who lives for self; Jesus calls such a person a fool. It is legitimate to use the wise and foolish builders to illustrate the gospel. The wise man puts his full confidence in the Rock, Christ Jesus, as Lord and Savior. The foolish man refuses to repent and rejects Jesus as his only hope of salvation. But the interpretation of the parable actually carries us beyond salvation to its practical outworking in the Christian life. – Believers' Bible Commentary

The Authority of Jesus

Mat 7:28 *And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching,*

Mat 7:29 *for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.*

Our Lord Jesus was that kind of teacher—He taught with authority; He wasn't just repeating something He had read. And you and I need to recognize that we have nothing worthwhile to say unless it is with the authority of the Word of God and unless we believe it is the Word of God. I don't want to hear a man who gives me a string of theories, theories which he himself has never tried and actually knows nothing about. Today we have a gospel to give, a message of salvation. We know it works because it has worked in our case. And we have seen it work in the lives of others who have come to Christ.

My friend, the Sermon on the Mount is a glorious passage of Scripture. Don't bypass it. If you read it aright, it will bring you to the person of Jesus Christ. It will show you how you fail to measure up to its precepts. It will show you that you are weak and guilty. It will make you cry for mercy and will bring you to the person of Christ for salvation. When you accept Christ as Savior, He will give you the Holy Spirit who will enable you to live on this high standard. - McGee