

BEING JUDICIOUS WITHOUT BEING JUDGMENTAL **Matthew 7:1-6**

INTRODUCTION:

I do not always begin a sermon by reading my text but I want to today. I want you to follow along as I read from Matthew 7:1-6. This passage is found on page 961 in the pew Bible, in case you decide you would like to use that resource. Now watch the text and listen closely.

¹ “Do not judge, or you too will be judged. ² For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

³ “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? ⁴ How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? ⁵ You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.

⁶ “Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces.

Did you catch a conundrum in that passage? At the beginning of the text, Jesus said, “Do not judge” but at the end, he said we are not to give dogs what is sacred and not throw our pearls to pigs.

Do you see the predicament? We are not to judge but we are to recognize a dog and a pig when we see them.

Jesus commands that we not be judgmental but he demands that we be discerning. Will you allow me to illustrate the difference for you?

The Lone Ranger and Tonto stopped in the desert for the night. After they got their tent all set up, both men fell sound asleep.

Some hours later, Tonto woke the Lone Ranger and said, "Kemo Sabe, look towards sky, what you see?"

The Lone Ranger replied, "I see millions of stars."

"What that tell you?" asked Tonto.

The Lone Ranger pondered for a minute then said, "Astronomically speaking, it tells me there are millions of galaxies and potentially billions of planets. Astrologically, it tells me that Saturn is in Leo. Chronologically, it appears to be approximately a quarter past three in the morning. Theologically, it's evident the Lord is all-powerful and we are small and

insignificant. Meteorologically, it seems we will have a beautiful day tomorrow. What does it tell you, Tonto?"

Tonto was silent for a moment, then said, "Kemo Sabe, it tells me you are dumber than a box of rocks! And it tells me that someone stole our tent."

When Tonto observed that someone had stolen their tent, that reflected discernment. But when Tonto called the Lone Ranger "dumber than a box of rocks" that was being judgmental. Do you see the difference?

In our text, Jesus teaches about the importance of being discerning without being judgmental. He uses four figures of speech to address this issue of judging.

- ✓ He speaks about measured judgment.
- ✓ He talks about a person having something in his eye.
- ✓ He warns about giving something sacred to dogs
- ✓ He cautions about giving pearls to pigs

At first blush, the first two metaphors seem to contradict the last two. But upon closer study, we can see that these are not contradictory: they are complimentary. These are admonitions that churches need to hear...and heed.

I. **DON'T BE JUDGMENTAL (7:1-5)**

It is so easy to be critical of other people. It is especially easy to be critical of those who serve us. And I might add that those who work the hardest are easier targets than those who do nothing. Those who do nothing are not likely to do anything wrong. But those who do the most may, in the process, do something with which someone will disagree.

We'd better pay careful attention to Jesus' command that we not judge. He gives us two very good reasons not to judge another.

A. **None of us are innocent enough to judge (7:1-2)**

¹ "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. ² For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

We ought to remember that we will be held to the same standard to which we hold other people. When you are passing judgment on another person, ask yourself if you could stand up to the same scrutiny to which you are subjecting him.

None of us are innocent enough to judge another.

B. **None of us are perceptive enough to judge (7:3-5)**

And none of us are perceptive enough to judge another. The man with a rafter or a railroad tie in his own eye is in no position to pick at the sawdust in the other guy's eye. The first man's perception is obscured by his own condition. His view is too distorted for him to be discerning.

The fact of the matter is, people who do not try to correct their own faults should not criticize the mistakes of others - - and especially of a Christian brother.

We also are not perceptive enough to pass judgment on another because our view is only partial. We only see the outward appearance so our conclusions are based on appearances.

In 1884 a young man died, and after the funeral his grieving parents decided to establish a memorial to him. With that in mind, they met with Charles Eliot, president of Harvard University. Eliot received the modest looking couple into his office and asked what he could do. After they expressed their desire to fund a memorial, Eliot impatiently said, "Perhaps you have in mind a scholarship."

We are thinking of something more substantial than that... perhaps a building." The woman replied. In a patronizing tone, Eliot brushed aside the idea as being too expensive and the couple departed.

Then the next year, Eliot learned that this plain pair had gone elsewhere and established a \$26 million memorial named Leland Stanford Junior University, better known today as Stanford University.

None of us are perceptive enough to judge each other accurately; so Jesus says, "Do not judge."

But having said that, "do not judge" is only half of the message of Matthew 7:1-6. The other half of the message is that, while we are not to be judgmental, we are to be judicious.

II. **DO BE JUDICIOUS (7:6)**

Jesus uses two homey figures of speech to illustrate his point that his disciples, while not being judgmental, are to be judicious.

⁶ "Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces."

A. **Dog's don't deserve that which is Divine**

"That which is sacred" is an expression that referred to meat that the priests had sacrificed as a burnt offering that was offered to God. The priests, who had, themselves, been consecrated and set apart for God,

were allowed to eat any of the meat that was not consumed by the fire on the altar. But no other human being was allowed to eat of that sacred meat.

Now if mortal men, made in the likeness and image of God, were not worthy to eat of this sacred meat, it was absolutely not to be given to dogs to eat. That which was sacred and set-apart for God was not to be treated so trivially. Such treatment would debase the very thing that now belongs to God.

I cannot read or reflect on this text without recalling an incident from my childhood. As a little kid (pre-school age), I wished that I could take communion. I could not, of course, because I had not committed my life to Christ and had not been buried with him in baptism. I had no real appreciation for what communion means. But I wanted a snack and I wished I could have one when the trays were passed.

My Dad was the minister at Tuscola, IL when I was a pre-schooler and Dad always went to the door to shake hands with the people as they were leaving church. While Dad was at the door, I'd hustle up to the communion table and start eating the bread and draining the glasses. I only did that a couple of times before it was reported to Dad and he had a talk with me. He explained that these were not refreshments. This is something sacred: something set apart. And that which is set apart for God is only to be eaten and drunk by people who have been set apart for God.

What Dad said made quite an impression on me and I began to eagerly anticipate being baptized...not just so I could have some crackers and grape juice, but so I could be set apart for God and could participate in this sacred family feast with the other people who have been set apart for God.

I was just a kid and I didn't know any better. But I was taught that that which is set apart for God is not to be used in a trivial or trifling way. Why, back in those days, we regarded the church building as something that had been set apart for God so we were not allowed to treat it as if it were a gymnasium. Seems like a lifetime ago, doesn't it?

B. Pigs don't appreciate pearls

Dogs don't deserve what is divine...and pigs don't appreciate pearls.

If pearls were thrown in front of a pig, the first thing a pig would do is try to eat them. Then, if the pig figured out that the pearls couldn't be eaten, all he'd do is trample the pearls into the mud.

Now, you really can't blame the pig. He doesn't know any better. After all, he's just a pig. He has no apprehension, no appreciation, no appropriateness for that which is of great value.

While sacred meat was reserved for priests, pearls were reserved for kings. Commoners would never own pearls. And if common people would never own pearls, how scandalous it would be to take a precious and regal element like a pearl and throw it in a hog pen. It would not be sensible to hurl to the hogs something that should be treasured.

Of course, Jesus wasn't really talking about dogs and hogs. He wasn't telling a story about Lassie and Miss Piggy. He was talking about people. J.W. Shepard, in his book *The Christ of The Gospels*, wrote:

The disciples of Jesus would meet with ungodly and hardened men who would dishonor the truth when they received it...like the wild boars of the Jordan valley [they] would trample the precious pearls underfoot in lack of appreciate and by rejection.

Clearly Jesus was talking about people who treat the gospel with scorn and contempt. Jesus said they were apt to trample the treasures of God under foot.

Another characteristic of the people about whom Jesus was speaking is that they treat the people of God with the same scorn and contempt as they treat the gospel. Jesus said that they "then turn and tear you to pieces."

Sometimes the servants of Jesus need to stop preaching the good news of the gospel where both the message and the messenger are treated with contempt.

As an ordained minister, I have been set apart for the ministry of the Word of God. God's Word is holy. His message is holy. And if people treat His Word and the servant of His Word in an unholy, contemptuous and disrespectful manner, the teaching of Jesus is that his disciples are to be discerning enough to recognize that and move on to take God's precious Word to people who will treasure it.

I believe this teaching also has application in your lives as well as mine. What if you are trying to share the things of God with people who only want to argue, criticize and condemn. What should you do?

1. Walk away from them.
2. Pray for them. Pray that God will open their hearts. Pray that God will put someone else in their path that they will hear. Pray that they will see the love of God and the life of Jesus in you and be drawn to the Lord by your example.

CONCLUSION:

The kingdom of God is precious indeed. Our Lord compared it to a treasure hidden in a field and a pearl of great price (Matt. 13:44-46). The Jews in Antioch of Pisidia rejected the gospel and Paul says they judged themselves "*unworthy of everlasting life*" -- so Paul turned to the Gentiles (Acts 13:47).

One of the hardest decisions to make is when to quit pressing someone to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior. The fact is, sometimes we cheapen the gospel, demean discipleship and belittle the Son of God when we give people the impression that they are doing the Lord a favor by deciding to become a Christian. The truth is that when you decide to follow Jesus and obey his every command, you are the beneficiary of the priceless gift of eternal life.

Showing judgment without being judgmental is a difficult balance to achieve. Perhaps the secret is to be found in Jesus' teaching in John 7:24 – "Stop judging by mere outward appearances and make a right judgment.

INVITATION: #429 – "*They'll Know We Are Christians*"

In the time of Christ, pigs were regarded as unclean animals in the Jewish faith, so in a sense, the phrase might refer to giving great things to beings which are not worthy. But we must remember that none of us are worthy of the great gift that God gave us when He sent His son to die for us.

Some scholars have also pointed out that pearls would be useless to pigs, so the phrase illustrates that it is foolish to give precious things to people who cannot or will not use them. Pigs cannot realize the value of pearls when they see them, so tossing pearls to swine would really just be a waste.

Given the fact that Jesus had just been telling us not to judge others and not to pick at the speck in their eye when we have a log in our own eye, I wonder if he is not giving us one other facet to this same teaching. Maybe he was saying that

We do not treat the precious truths of Jesus with proper respect when we keep

When people ask for us to leave them alone we need to respect their wishes and move on. I believe that we degrade the gospel when we take the very best that we have and lay it at the [feet of swine](#)!