

Matthew 7:1-12

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Date: 27 May 2018

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[0 : 00] And if you'd pray those two great commands of Scripture of turning your phones off and turning to Matthew chapter 7.

! Matthew 7, 1-12 this morning. I don't know whether you can remember the reading, Matthew 7, 1-12.

But I think one of the problems with the sermon on the mount is we are so used to looking at it in little sections. Sometimes it's very difficult to see the connections.

And how is Matthew 7, 1-12 connected? It speaks of logs and dogs and hogs.

But how is all that pulled together? What is the connection? Is there any link between Jesus talking about what he's talking about? So in verses 1-5 he takes you to the oculist. And then in verses 6 he takes you to the cafe.

[1 : 05] And then in verses 7-9 he takes you to the farm. How is it all connected? How does it all link up? I think Jesus gives us the clue in verse 1.

He says, judge not. Stop judging. And that is the link that I think we often miss. The link about judging. Proper judgment and having discernment.

That actually goes right the way through this chapter. And these first 12 verses. That seems to be the keynote. And so four points this morning. I think Jesus teaches us first of all the restriction on judging.

The restriction on judging. Stop judging in order that you would not be judged. That's the command. Jesus is making this command isn't he?

He's saying that habit of persistent ongoing fault finding that people have. And again we need to remember the context. Jesus is speaking to his disciples. And he is saying to his followers.

[2 : 03] Get rid of this habit of carping criticism. Even this idea of condemning other people enters into it as well. And he seems to have in mind this carping criticism fault finding.

That centres on non-essentials. And we get that from verses 3-5 don't we? We see this fellow who seems to see a speck of sawdust in his brother's eye.

You know on rather small matters. They get all disturbed and critical. And he says stop judging that. Stop judging that.

See the great big plank in your own eye. Charles Spurgeon when he was in his early ministry. He started being a minister when he was 17. He was just a young man and he made a number of mistakes.

He was young at that time. There was a certain fellow that would come to him every Monday and point out his mistakes. And one day this man, his name was Mr Brimley. He was actually the mayor of Cambridge.

[3 : 04] He said to young Spurgeon. Is it really true that you told your people the other Sunday that if a thief would get into heaven he would pick the angels pockets? This version said well yes.

If a thief, if it were possible for an ungodly person without him being changed by the Holy Spirit, without him being born again, if he got into heaven with the same nature as he's got now, if a thief got into heaven and his nature was unchanged it wouldn't do any good.

He would steal in heaven. He would go around as a thief picking the angels pockets. My dear fellow Brimley said, don't you realise angels don't have pockets? And Spurgeon said with the same gravity, no sir.

Well I didn't realise that. But I will put this right. I'm glad to hear from someone who knows.

Following Monday morning, Spurgeon goes into his shop and he goes into Mr Brimley's shop and he said, Mr Brimley I put the matter right.

What matter? I put the angels pockets. Mr Brimley looked horrified and said, what did you say? Spurgeon said, I told my people that I made a mistake when I was preaching to them last Sunday. [4 : 10] I told them that if a thief got into heaven with his nature unchanged, he would still go around picking the angels pockets. But that I have subsequently heard from no lesser person than the mayor of Cambridge, someone who knows that angels have no pockets.

And so I don't want you to go around with the false notion about heaven. And so I told them that if a thief were ever to get into heaven with a nature unchanged, then she would go around plucking the feathers out of the angels' wings. Mr Brimley said furiously, I will never try to set you straight again. Spurgeon replied, that is precisely what I wanted you to say. Now that was a very silly illustration. But some people have this habit, don't they? They have a habit of carping and fault-finding. And Jesus says, stop it. It's really interesting. He says, stop it. We often don't think we can say that. Stop this habit of fault-finding and criticising.

But it's become part of your nature. The young composer gave a concert. It didn't fare well with the critics. The critics really panned it. They didn't care for it. But Gene Sibelius, the famous Finnish composer, consoled the young fellow.

[5 : 15] He patted him on the shoulder and he says, remember, son, there is not one city in the world where they've erected a statue to a critic. Stop judging. Now why is it that we have this habit of doing so?

There are certain reasons why we shouldn't do it. Or we put it positively, there are reasons why we do it. First reason is that we forget our position before God.

Stop judging, Jesus says, that you be not judged. For with the judgement you pronounce, you will be judged. And with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

What does he mean when he says, lest you be judged, that you be not judged? He doesn't mean that if you're critical of someone, of others, they'll be critical of you.

That isn't what he's saying. He isn't saying a kind of karma, you criticise others and it'll all come back to you. Probably what Jesus means is when he says that you be not judged, that passive verb refers frequently, it has the idea of God's activity.

[6 : 26] What he's saying, do not judge lest you be judged by God. And so what Jesus is saying is, realise that, stop that. This habit of judging, lest you be judged.

You need to know that you too stand under the judgement of God. You also are one who is going to be judged. And at that point, if you've been brought up in an evangelical church, you'll say, hang on a minute, hang on a minute.

If God has brought me to faith in Jesus, then I will not face judgement anymore. Three things students always say. Every sin is exactly the same.

It's all the same, which it isn't. I can't remember what the third one is. The second one is this.

There's no judgement for Christians. We will not face judgement.

And that is true in one sense, isn't it? There is no more condemnation in Christ Jesus. Wonderfully so. You're not judged according, with regard to your salvation. That you are secure in him.

[7 : 33] There is no way that God is going to change his mind. There's no way that God is going to overturn his verdict on your life. God will not change his mind.

But that doesn't mean that as a Christian disciple, you will not be judged for the quality of your Christian life. And that is actually a lot of the teaching in the New Testament.

So, in Romans 14, where he says, in verse 12, 10 of verse 12, You then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgement seat.

So each one of us will give an account for himself to God. That's what Paul means in 2 Corinthians 5. Again, he's talking to Christians. And he says, for we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ.

that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body. In other words, you need to be careful and I need to be careful because you and I too will stand before Christ's judgement seat for the quality of our Christian life.

[8 : 34] You too will be judged. Your temper, the gifts that the Lord has given you and how you've used them, your criticism of other. And Jesus says, don't forget, not only don't forget your position, but you are blind so often to your own sins.

And that is the point of verses 3 to 5, isn't it? Why do you see the little speck that's in your brother's eye but don't notice the great big log that's in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, let me take the speck out of your eye when there is a log in your own eye?

You hypocrite. First, get rid of the log out of your own eye and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. It's stupid, isn't it, to go up to him and say, you've got this little speck of dust in your eye that's making it red and you've got this massive 2x4 plank in your eye. How are you ever going to be able to see to do that? Hypocrite, first of all, remove it. It's like somebody with loads of dandruff on their shoulders going up to somebody with a tiny little fluff and saying, oh, you've got something on your suit and rubbing it off.

Sort yourself out. There's a terrible blindness, isn't there, in you and I to our own sin. And we need to be aware of that.

[9 : 55] And that is involved in what Jesus is saying. In verses 3 to 5, he says, judge not in verse 1. You can see that what he means in verses 3 to 5, isn't he?

He's saying, don't judge hypocritically. Hypocritically. It's interesting, Jesus is not forbidding, he's not saying, be gullible, he's not saying, don't be discerning.

He's saying, don't judge hypocritically. Don't judge in a way that is blind to your own sin. We can see it in others, can't we, but not in ourselves.

And that is what Jesus is addressing here. When we go to camp in Swansea, we stay in the church I grew up in. And it's a kind of, it's a 19th century building, the toilets are pretty grotty where the gents are anyway.

And there's a sink, but the mirror to the sink is on a different wall, which is really fine, apart from when you want to go and shave. You want to try to shave without a mirror?

[10 : 57] Men? It's so difficult, isn't it? Because you cannot shave without a mirror. Can you? You end up with streaks while I'm not shaving at the moment.

You cannot shave without a mirror. Because you have to see yourself. And you can very clearly see others, the sin of others, but you can't very clearly see yourself, and so stop judging.

The kind of hypocritical judgment. So let me say this, one of the ways that we frequently do this is actually in gossip. We may not even be conscious that we're doing it, but we may be speaking to someone else about someone else.

And we are in some way pulling them down, and that person may agree with us to some degree. So we don't think of it as gossip. Let's stop judging, unless you be judged.

So there's a restriction on judging. Secondly, let's see in verse 6, there's the requirement of judging. Requirement of judging. Look at verse 6. Don't give dogs what is holy.

[12 : 08] Don't throw your pearls before pigs, lest you trample them underfoot and turn to attack you. Don't worry about the meaning of it now for a moment, we'll come back to that. But just notice the language.

Do you see what Jesus is saying? He is assuming that you're going to obey whatever it is he means in verse 6. And so, if you're going to obey verse 6, what have you got to work out?

You've got to work out who are the dogs and who are the pigs, haven't you? You're going to have to judge, you're going to have to discern. You're going to have to stop judging as he taught you in verses 1-5, a kind of carping, critical, hypocritical kind of judging.

But you see, Jesus does balance and in verse 6 he's now saying, don't give what is holy to the dogs and don't throw your pearls before the hogs. And so you have to know, don't you, who are the dogs and who are the hogs if you're going to obey this.

Jesus is not forbidding all kinds of judgment. He's just putting a balance on what he said in verse 1-5. Much like he does in Proverbs 26. He has got those funny verses in it, two verses back to back.

[13 : 19] And one of them says, don't answer a fool according to his folly. And then in the very next verse it says, answer a fool according to his folly. And it gives a reason for both those things.

It's balancing there, but you need to see the big picture. You have to think there is a paradox. There are two truths which seem contradictory, but actually when you take them together they're both very helpful. There's a sort of judging that you ought to do, and this is the requirement of judging.

And so that tells you and I that the mushy, ordinary, bog standard interpretation of verse 1 cannot be right.

So people shoot off verse 1 all the time, don't they? Maybe you're talking about a public scandal in business or in public, and you state how wrong it is and so unjust, and then somebody comes in

and says, the Bible says, judge not and be not judged.

Or there's some public teacher in the church and they are rejecting what the Bible is saying on sexuality and homosexuality and they are speaking really clearly against the Bible's message and you state that and somebody comes and says to you, the Bible says, don't judge.

[14:37] Now you see what Jesus is saying in verse 6? There is a kind of discernment, there is a kind of judgment that you have to make. He's not assuming that you have a mind that is kind of morally neutral and mushy.

No. He's saying there's a kind of discernment that you have to make. There's a discernment that He wants you to have. Now look at the details. What does He mean by what is holy? And who are the dogs? And what are the pearls?

And who are the pigs? Well, so probably this. What is holy refers to anything of the sacred things of God. particularly the gospel and His word about the kingdom that He's been speaking about and the offering of Jesus as the King of the kingdom and the pearls it probably has to do with the treasure of the kingdom, the treasure of the gospel.

And He's saying that there are some that are hogs and dogs. Dogs used to be a term that was used for the Gentiles. I don't think He's using it in that way.

But He is taking it He's saying a dog is a pejorative term. It's still used today as a pejorative term. And it's saying they are essentially there are some who are like that.

[15:59] He's not thinking of your pet dog I think on the children's show isn't it there's a lovely picture of a retriever or a Labrador or something like that. When He talks about dogs He's not talking about a dog like that. Draw a big pair of fangs on that children.

Dogs that go through the rubbish. Dogs that bite and carry rabies. They're not the sort of things that you'd like to have in your house or in your garden or let your kids play with.

They're wild. They're not nice to have us. Jesus is saying there are some people they've rejected the gospel and they are so antagonistic with the gospel and anti the gospel that they may tell you so.

And they say I don't want to hear. I don't want to hear. And they may say leave me alone. They might say don't even talk about Jesus to me.

They may say it very politely in a British kind of way. Don't even invite me to that. I don't want to know anything about the kingdom of God. I don't want anything to do with that.

[17:02] I like you but I can't stand this Jesus stuff. And Jesus says respect them. And leave them alone. Because don't throw what is precious to dogs and hogs who've rejected it.

Don't give anything that is sacred to people who despise the sacred things of God. It's not meant to keep us from telling others what they know Jesus. It's mainly saying that there are certain circumstances there are certain people that prefer not to be bothered with the gospel.

And when you tell them that leave them to God. That's the kind of thing. You don't give sacred things to people who despise that.

And that is what Jesus seems to be saying. And when we do this what do we make of this? Jesus himself when he gives us an example do you remember Luke 23? Jesus comes before Herod and Pilate sent Jesus before Herod and when Herod saw him Luke tells us he was really pleased.

Because for a long time he wanted to see Jesus and he hoped that he could see Jesus through some kind of miracle. And so he asked Jesus loads of questions but Jesus gave him no answer.

[18:21] Herod is there he's curious about Jesus but he's not serious about committing his life to Jesus. And so Jesus doesn't go for it. He leaves Herod alone.

He doesn't offer to do a little heavenly trick a miracle this will satisfy your curiosity. Herod has got no desire for the truth at all and so Jesus leaves him alone. He doesn't even answer does he?

Or the Apostles Lord in Acts 13 and Acts 18 two different places in Antioch and in Corinth the Jews make so much fuss that they abuse him and Barnabas and Silas and they reject his message and Paul says we had to offer the gospel to you first but since you think that you are unworthy of eternal life we turn to the Gentiles.

We're turning and taking the gospel away from you and we're giving it to the Gentiles. you see people who don't want to have any truck with the gospel then it's taken from them.

Don't throw what is precious to those who despise it. That is Jesus' point. It takes really different forms. In 1555 John Calvin was in the city of Geneva and he was having a problem.

[19 : 41] There was a man who was notoriously immoral and drunk and the elders of the church along with Calvin they excommunicated him because of his conduct. He was banned from the Lord's Supper.

But the civil magistrates the city officials they overturned that decision of the elders and they gave this fellow the right to partake of communion again.

The day came on a September morning it was communion Sunday and after Calvin preached his sermon when he went down from the pulpit and thinking that this guy John Bethelier was in the audience and that he would want to come to the table to defy him Calvin said to the people I have prayed to the Lord for firmness and my prayer has been answered.

And he told them if anyone who had been banned from the Lord's Supper should come forward to try to partake of that supper Calvin said I will do what the clear command of my master requires me to do. And then raising his voice and stretching out his hands he said lay down my life before these hands shall reach forth for the sacred things of God to those who have been branded as despisers. John Bethelier didn't come because he had to make a stand didn't he Calvin? He was a man who cared for the things of God and so there may well be I think there probably is going to be in your dealings with people there will be somebody who says point blank to you I want no more of your witness I don't want any more of your Christianity and I think Jesus is teaching us here we have to respect that don't cast the pearls of the gospel before those who will have none of it and tell you that but verse six is also a terrifying warning because it shows you and I how far antagonism to the gospel can go how far it can take you it can give you the nature of a pig or a dog and that ought to be to you a great warning that you can put yourself in such resistance and antagonism to the gospel that it can put you beyond the hope of responding to it that if you harden your heart one day

[22 : 13] God will say enough is enough and if you continually and persistently refuse the gospel and maintain that stance you are on your way to the kind of antagonism to the truth that will place you in a place where you're not even able to hear the gospel anymore and you need to be aware of that thirdly Jesus says there's not only a restriction on judging and the requirement of judging but thirdly there's the resources for judging and as you look at those verses it says ask and it will be given to you seek and you will find knock and the door will be open to you and we love those verses but when you look at them in the context of what it says you say why does Jesus do that what is he on about can you see the connection between verses 5 and 6 what Jesus is doing here it's not really disconnected if you look at verses 1 to 6 how can I do that how can I have the knowledge to do that how can I live in that way how can I be aware of the log that's in my own eye so that I don't judge blindly without seeing my faults that's a question you might have or you might have a question how can I discern how on earth can you tell whether or not someone is despising the sacred things of

God and the gospel how do you know when I should leave them alone how can I know the difference between improper critical condemning kind of judging and somebody having a true discernment of their true state how can I distinguish between that and you've got all these questions and so Jesus says to you doesn't he verse 7 ask and it will be given to you seek and you will find knock and the door will be opened to you how can I know the difference and know Jesus' words and Jesus ask pray to the father that is the way that you receive the discernment and understanding that you need in order to obey Jesus' commands it's the same thing in James 1 James 1 verse 5 if any one of you lacks wisdom then he'll ask of God and he'll liberally give it and when you read that you think that's come out of nowhere but before that Jesus has said count it all joy brothers and sisters if you fall into various sorrows and so on so why did

James say if any of you lack wisdom let him ask of God it's all connected James is saying if you fall into trial it's not that that you need deliverance from right away but you need to know how to endure it you need to know how to go through suffering you need to know how are you going to be steadfast and faithful to Jesus and count it all joy in the midst of trials well if anyone lacks let him ask of God and it's connected and it's the same as it is here what Jesus is doing here though in the way that he speaks is he's trying to give you more than the fact that you should go on believing and asking in prayer he's trying to encourage you look at what he says in verse 9 to 11 or which of you if his son asks him for bread will you give him a stone or if he asks for a fish will you give him a servant and if you then are evil and you know how to give good gifts to your children how much more will your father who's in heaven give good things to those who ask him notice how he describes earthly fathers he says they are evil if you then being evil that's

Jesus' assessment of my nature and yours Jesus says you have a sinful human nature and that is what he means and if you think that men and women and boys and girls are basically constituted as good well you don't agree with Jesus he assumed it he said to his disciples if you then being evil he doesn't mean that you're as evil as you possibly could be of course not but he does mean that you and I and I have this root of evil and sin within me if you then being evil see the contrast if you have the competence and even enough natural affection to play not to play tricks on your own sons and daughters how much more will your heavenly father give to those who ask him what's Jesus saying he's saying one of you dads wouldn't do something like this your son comes in you've spent all afternoon decorating a stone as a piece of bread and your son comes in and says can I have one of those rolls and you say yeah take the chop one and your son is so hungry that he picks it up and he doesn't realise that it's a piece of stone and he bites into it and he breaks three teeth and you say it's a stone you thought it was bread but it's a rock it's so funny let's go to the dentist none of you would be so low down evil to do that would you none of you would be so sinful your daughter asks you for a packed lunch tomorrow he says what would she like in the packed lunch and she says I'd love a piece of fish and he said it would be really funny if I put a serpent in there and she comes into school and she opens up the picnic box or the lunch box and out comes the serpent RSPTA and the police are called and you laugh you know how to be consistent with your children you know how much more Jesus is saying he will give good things to those who ask you can trust him God the father will not double cross you God is not looking for loopholes to get out of answering your prayers he says get rid of superstition get rid of this nonsense I think Christians can be really superstition we think if I come to God in prayer like this I'm afraid he's going to call me to be a missionary or something like that you you can trust you can trust your father in heaven it doesn't mean you won't have questions about what he gives you but the point is you can depend on a faithful father and then fourthly and really briefly he gives you the rule of judging verse 12 verse 12 yes he doesn't help us with the headings being where they are he says so whatever you wish that others would do to you do also to!

[28 : 42] this is the law the prophets that's the rule in judging you notice how it ties it in with what has gone before doesn't it it says it should say now therefore so therefore it's in the negative it's it's it's it's not in the negative it's not whatever you don't want people to do to you don't do to them it's positive all things that you would like others to do to you!

you also want to do the same for them it leaves all sorts of room for creativity and there's positivity and energy in verse 12 but the thing I want you to notice is the place where it occurs he's trying to say he's trust your heavenly father he's saying your heavenly father look how much more will he give good things to you so then if your heavenly father has got such goodness towards you his people then show the goodness of the father in the way that you deal with others as part of the connection it connects to verses 1 to 5 and you wonder how am I to judge well here's the rule you can't form a precise rule for every situation but here's a general rule to let you know how you're going to judge if you are going to be judging others in some way which you are going to be because we cannot live without judging others you better make sure that you how would

I want someone else to judge me but I'd want someone else to judge me considerably and I'd want them to consider all the circumstances that I'm under in a certain situation I'd want them to judge me kindly I'd prefer that they judge me directly and they didn't go to others and gossip about me or to someone else but they do it directly and when they state their case I'd want them to judge me temperately that they don't blow my I'd want them to judge me privately and if they are something against me I prefer that if I need correction that they would not do it in front of a group of people and they wouldn't bring it up all of a sudden but they have the courage to judge me privately isn't that the way you want to be judged well if that's the way you want to be judged verse 12 is saying that's how you judge others and notice the rationale of this we should act in this way because this is what the law and the prophets are all about that is what the old testament requires we don't act in this way because it's pragmatic because it's for our profit we don't act like this because it's for our advantage because other folks will like us better no that is not the basic reason

Jesus doesn't say you'll feel better if you do this he doesn't say you do it for a social reason so that enhance your reputation there are times where our morals and our ethics only hang together because of our concern of what other people would think of us we don't do certain things because it would ruin our reputation or we wouldn't receive favour or esteem and pleasing God or obeying God's words hardly enters into our consideration why is it that I seek to obey the first part of verse

12 if I do it only for social esteem and if it's only that I'll feel better and it's not that the Bible requires what he requires is that it pleases God and why I do something is a great index of whose I am and Jesus saying to you and I that there is a rule in judging that will handle every detail it won't happen but it will give you the greatest help in most cases and Jesus saying stop judging this by mere appearance and make a right judgment that soon go in prayer