

## Introduction

Last time we tried to keep the judging passage (Mat 7.1-5) in balance. We noted that censoriousness or a judgmental spirit is discouraged while just judging is encouraged. If we deal squarely and repentantly with our own log-like sins, then we can see clearly to help others with the pieces of sawdust-like sins lodged in their eyes. The suggestion is that we have the obligation to help one another with regard to various sinful problems. We need each other in this regard, but we do not thereby become self-appointed inspectors of other people's lives as some kind of special calling. That would be censoriousness. It is censorious to be constantly pointing out sin in others (first dwelling on their sins and then speaking about them, even though our vision is impaired and our speech stutters).

In contrast, just judging will proceed with reluctance. Furthermore, we must judge others not only reluctantly but also tenderly because the eye in Jesus' illustration indicates the delicacy involved. Thus, Matthew 7.5 calls us to a reluctant, moderate, and tender judging of others that has the goal of removing things that bring pain to the life, as foreign elements bring pain to the eye. Of course, using rusty steel wool to remove the speck of sawdust only makes matters worse, as does censoriousness-driven policing of other people's conduct.

Now as we move to Matthew 7.6, we have further confirmation of the responsibility of judging others justly. We must discriminate between people in order to identify those who act like animals. We have to make judgments. We must draw conclusions and exercise discrimination.

Matthew 7.6 speaks of judging in a particularly blunt way: **Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.** It is so blunt that we might wonder what is going on here. Therefore, what I want to do is to identify the subject (ID what the subject is in a broad sense), clarify it (by giving details), and qualify it (by emphasizing the specific nuance of this text). It will take 2/3's of the sermon to get to the specific nuance in the last 1/3.

1A. Let us first identify the subject of the text (in the big picture, what is the subject?)

The passage is brief (one verse, Mat 7.6). The flow of thought is undeveloped and seemingly disconnected (cf. the speck in the brother's eye, v. 5, dogs/pigs, v. 6, and prayer, v. 7). Nevertheless, we sense that we have some application of judging on the table because of verses 1-5 and the language of dogs and pigs in verse 6.

Even though there is no amplification in the text, with its brevity, still the general subject is self-evident. Dogs and pigs have something sacred (holy things) and something valuable (pearls) given to them or withheld from them. A principle of restraint applies to some tendency to give holy things and pearls to them. Dogs and pigs represent people, obviously sinful people.

Now what is the holy and sacred treasure that we tend to give to sinful people that runs the risk of beast-like reactions? What might we do that involves giving something holy to dogs and casting pearls before pigs?

Once we put the question like this, the answer leaps off the pages of the NT. The holy treasure is the gospel, the NT gospel of fulfillment (cf. the kingdom is like a treasure, and like a merchant in search of fine pearls, Mat. 13.44-46).

In the broadest sense, our topic for this morning is the responsibility of Christians to testify to their faith. Although we may wonder about the language of this text and its apparent harsh tone, we can state emphatically that the basic underlying subject is Christian witnessing (the giving of the gospel to sinners, the spreading of the word; giving and throwing it).

2A Now we need to clarify

We need to clarify and explain some things about the subject that help us appreciate the specific point of Matthew 7.6 (we need to discuss the whole pie before we get to the slice of the pie contained in 7.6). To clarify the meaning of Christian witnessing bearing, we can start with a summary statement. Witnessing is the presentation of a universal offer of salvation in Christ. From this summary, we can isolate three concerns.

1B. First, witnessing centers on the person and work of Christ

The gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ as to who He is and what He has done in His appearance on the scene of human history. He is both God and man, in two distinct natures and one person forever. The Westminster catechisms are helpful on this point:

**The only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the eternal Son of God, became man and so was, and continueth to be, God and man in two distinct natures, and one person, forever (WSC, A21).**

**The only Mediator of the covenant of grace is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the eternal Son of God, of one substance and equal with the Father, in the fulness of time became man, and so was and continues to be God and man, in two entire distinct natures [two entire natures *and* two distinct natures], and one person, for ever (WLC, A36).**

Therefore, in our thinking of Him, we must neither divide the person nor confound the natures. He is God the Son. He existed long before His birth. He existed before the creation of the world. He is the creator of all things along with the Father (Jo 1.1-3). He came down from heaven. His birth was an incarnation by which He identified with flesh and blood human beings (Jo 1.14) because God's elect people partook of flesh and blood (Heb 2.14-15). Jesus came to save them, to do so He had to add human nature to His divine nature. He became a man in order to become an offering for sin, to lay down His life in order to take it up again. He did this to give life to the world, to save the human race from its lost and perishing condition (Jo 3.17; 1 Co 15.22, 45). These things are at the very center and core of our testifying to the faith. We testify to the faith once given to the saints from Christ through the apostles by the Holy Spirit. We testify to the apostolic testimony as we pray for clear and bold proclamation of Paul's gospel (Col 4.2-4) and Peter's gospel (1 Pet 1.12).

2B. Second, witnessing focuses salvation in the person and work of Christ

In our witness, we focus on the good news of *salvation* through the person and work of Christ. Salvation is deliverance from the loss of dignity and true humanity to the restoration of dignity and true humanity. It refers to the saving deliverance of man's entire existence, and thus to freedom from God's judgment, to the freedom of sonship with a marvelous heavenly inheritance (cf. the Beatitudes and the inheritance of the earth and the kingdom of heaven, Mat. 5.1-12 involving the new human race, the new race in the second Adam, the new family).

Man's problem is essentially twofold. He has an indebtedness he cannot pay. He is in a bondage he cannot escape. The saving cross of Christ looks to both of these problems with mercy, grace, and power.

Christ pays the sin debt of God's elect in full (Heb 2.14-15, 17). Then, sometime in the history of God's elect on earth, the Holy Spirit delivers them from bondage to sin. It is as radical as the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt to the other side of the Red Sea. Picture the word of God going out of the mouth of Christ like a sword that pierces hearts (Heb 4.12) and conquers our resisting wills (cf. Rom 5.10, His death secured the conquest of our rebelling hearts: "**while enemies...we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son**"). He is the great Shepherd who seeks each one that God gave to Him (Jo 17.1-2). He seeks until He finds, and when He finds He irresistibly draws us savingly to Himself (Lk 15.3, 8, 32). That is how He brings the lost sheep home to the Father with joy and rejoicing. He seeks, finds, saves, and begins a work that He continues until His elect are at home with Him in glory (Phil 1.6).

This is the good news of salvation through the person and work of Jesus Christ our risen Lord. Thus, we sing. We sing these words: "loving me, seeking me, finding me, keeping me, He

is mine.” Christian witnessing announces the salvation of sinners from beginning to end, a salvation that is one-hundred per cent of the Lord. This is man’s true hope. This directs the needy sinner totally away from himself to God.

3B. Third, Christian witnessing proclaims a universal offer of salvation in Christ

Per the Great Commission (Mat 28), we are to disciple the nations, baptizing them and teaching them all that Jesus commanded. This is bigger than evangelism and conversion, it is about discipleship (cf. Hart and Muether, *With Reverence and Awe: Returning to the Basics of Reformed Worship*, 45).

It is an international gospel. There is now national universalism, in NT times, in contrast to the former Jewish particularism of OT times. Thus, John 12.32 speaks of the drawing of all people to Christ. That is, it speaks of drawing people of all nations, including Greeks with the Jews: when I die on the cross, I will draw people of all nations savingly to myself. (This is on the “other side” of Mat 10, “**go only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel,**” and on the other side of the cross and resurrection)

It is not unconditional but conditional. It is not simply to whosoever but to whosoever believes. It is a promise to faith, a promise to each one who believes. This wide-open promise is part of the mystery of godliness “proclaimed to the nations” (1 Tim 3.16).

Therefore, the message of Christian witnessing proclaims both the gift of faith by God’s sovereign grace and the promise to faith (cf. How Peter does this when he proclaims the promise to “**you, your children, and all afar off,**” that is, “**to as many as the Lord our God calls to himself,**” Acts 2.39).

How do we connect gift and promise? We do so by noting that the gospel message of both the gift of faith and promise to faith is the context in which God calls irresistibly, irrevocably and savingly to the hearts of His elect. The Spirit uses Scripture effectually to call sinners to faith, to change hearts of rebellion to hearts of submission to Christ. The gospel is the good news of God’s absolute and irrevocable work of salvation from beginning to end (there is no real good news wherever dependence is placed on man).

Thus in human history, God gives the gift of faith and saves His elect *by the gospel preached among the nations* (cf. 2 Thess 2.13-14, the chosen are called through Paul’s gospel, the good news we now have in the NT).

3A. It is now time to qualify our subject in terms of Matthew 7.6

It speaks of judging... in application to Christian witness bearing. In the broadest sense, our topic is the responsibility of Christians to testify to their faith but in a very specific sense, our topic is “Discriminating Christian Witness Bearing” rooted in the Great Commission (Mat 28).

What is distinctive about this text in Matthew 7 in contrast to the Great Commission is its negative cast. On the surface, it does not seem to square with going to the nations. However, the passage presupposes gospel presentation as a positive; otherwise, the negative detail of the text would make no sense.

The large subject is our responsibility to do what we can to spread the good news of Christ to the nations, to announce the promise of salvation that is by faith in the person and work of Christ. This subject is qualified in our text in a negative way that implies a positive.

1B. First, negatively, Jesus says, do not give the gospel when you sense determined opposition and depreciation of its message.

Dogs are wild, savage, wolf-like packs roaming the countryside. Pigs are notably ignorant and unclean.

Thus, Jesus is telling us that as we go spreading the gospel across the earth that we must make just judgments regarding the attitudes and conduct of those who hear us. When we sense an adamant spirit of opposition and contempt, we are to withdraw our testimony, back off and retreat for the time being. When we sense an onslaught of blasphemy or a degrading of the precious truths of the gospel like pearls trampled in the mud, then we are to make a judgment

and pull back. There are times when we are not to throw the gospel seed indiscriminately into the earth. Be sensitive, consider the glory of the gospel, and consider the “give and take” with those who hear. If there is a beast-like response, then do not give the holy teaching of Christ and the treasure of the gospel to those who show themselves to have no more appreciation for spiritual things than dogs and pigs.

2B. Second, positively, Jesus says, give the gospel with discernment, *but give it*

We are to do so wherever adamant opposition to the gospel is not dominant. Granted, the non-believer cannot see the things of the Spirit, nor can he receive them unless he is born from above (Jo 3.3, 10-12). However, Jesus is telling us that a wise way to do our duty of witnessing is to be good listeners by exercising discernment, judgment, and discrimination. Look for “worthy” hearers, for those who “receive you” (“if **anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet,**” Mat. 10.14; use seasoned speech with both insiders and outsiders that speaks to the need of the moment, Eph. 4.29; Col. 4.5-6).

We need wisdom with love or love with wisdom, tact, and discernment (just judgment!). We should continually pray for and look for an open door for the gospel for discipleship proclamation (which is much bigger than evangelism and conversion).

### Concluding Remarks

1) Matthew 7.6 contains startling language

On one hand, it gets our attention, provokes thought, and embeds things deep in our minds. We need skill and balance in the interpretation of our Lord’s words. Careful and prayerful meditation promises fruitfulness.

On the other hand, this language gives us a sober view of man. Human depravity is another underlying subject that surfaces here in a powerful way. People are like dogs and pigs. They have lost their humanity. Animal like behavior contradicts their true status as images of God. They have become inhuman and hence the well known “inhumanity of man to man.” (cf. What happened to the human race? Where did the “human” in human race go?)

2) Nevertheless, this text is an encouragement to witnessing of our faith

We should not lose sight of this fact. We are to give the gospel to people in need who are lost and do not understand the things of God. Of course, we are to be wise and not give holy things to dogs or pearls to swine. We are to “give” the gospel and “throw” it. Yes, cast the gospel net in a measured way, but cast it into the sea of peoples everywhere (sow the seed into the earth; cast your bread on the waters).

3) It is helpful to have the larger view of the Great Commission

We are to *go to all people*, whether *professing Christians or not*, with a discipling focus. *We must see all people as people in need of restoration from the fall.* Their need may be definitive (they need to be saved) or it may be progressive (they need to be sanctified) but whatever the case may be, we are to “go making disciples.” We fulfill the Great Commission when we engage non-believers with gospel truth. We fulfill the Commission when we engage other believers in matters of the gospel that edify. We are doing Great Commission work when we present a paper to Christian scholars at a seminar. We “go making disciples” when we seek to spread a better use of the means of grace as in the book on preaching communion remembrances.

4) We have hope

We may face dog and pig like responses to our message. If so, we will back off. However, not all respond in this way to the sacred things of God. Some mock, others postpone, and still others believe by grace (Acts 17.32-33; 18.27; 16.14). Therefore, we always have hope (cf. the heckler in Missouri: he adamantly opposed the gospel and its proclamation but then, years later, became a Christian and worked for the proclamation of the gospel; cf. my wife’s co-worker from years ago who back then was arrogant and self-righteous, but who now bows in humble submission to Christ). Jesus promised to build His church and build it He will through discriminating Christian witness bearing. Amen.