

# The Gospel of Matthew

## SERMON ON THE MT: JUDGING (7:1-6)

If you were standing before a court with your fate resting in the hands of a judge, how would you like to be judged? Would you value the qualities of equity, impartiality, and mercy? Chances are these virtues would take on a new importance to you. In the first six verses of Matthew chapter seven, Jesus reveals that this scenario is more than an illustration. In fact, your behavior today is directly tied to the quality of judgment you receive.

Remember the audience in this sermon; Jesus was speaking to disciples heavily influenced by the dominant religious leaders of the day, namely Pharisees. Jesus already demonstrated that the Pharisees embraced the wrong standards by exalting their traditions above God's Word (see Matthew 5:20-48). He also uncovered their hypocrisy in prayer, giving, and fasting (see Matthew 6:1-18). He is now correcting a judgmental attitude that was common among the legalistic Pharisees. The theme of the Sermon on the Mount is explaining the characteristics of true worship versus the flaws of false religion.

The concepts of this passage need to be understood because they are often abused by those who are seeking to escape God's standard of truth. Amazingly, the type of judgment God wants us to practice is often avoided today and the judgment He condemns is practiced frequently.

### Judge Not (7:1)

Let's begin our study by defining the word, "judge". If we understand the intention of this word, we will unlock many of the principles of this passage. The Greek word translated as "judge" in the KJV is *krino*. This word is used 98 times in the New Testament and is translated with various shades of meaning. Read the following passages and write the word into which *krino* was translated.

John 3:17	Condemn	Acts 21:25	Concluded
Acts 3:13	Determined	Romans 14:5	Esteemeth
Acts 15:19	Sentence	1 Corinthians 7:37	Hath Decreed
Acts 16:4	Ordained	2 Thessalonians 2:12	Might be Damned

Using some of the insight you just gained from this study, write a definition for "judge" below.

Judge – To judge is to make a final decree about a matter, passing judgment or condemnation.

To be sure, we are taught to judge justly in Scripture. Read Matthew 7:15-20, spoken by Jesus just a few short verses after He instructs us to "judge not". What are we instructed to do?

Jesus wants us to be fruit inspectors and beware of false prophets. We must consider what is being taught and the lives of those teaching us. If they are inconsistent with the pattern of God's Word, we should shun their teaching. This necessarily involves judgment.

# The Gospel of Matthew

## SERMON ON THE MT: JUDGING (7:1-6)

While at first there appears to be contradiction, we will find that there is a distinction between righteous judgment and the type of judgment condemned by Christ. It is absolutely essential for us to scripturally define and understand the difference between the two. The distinction is found in two areas: 1) what we judge, and 2) how we judge. In verse one, we will focus on studying what we are not to judge. Verses two through six speak to how we must judge.

What are the limitations of our judgment? Read 1 Corinthians 4:3-5 and Romans 12:18-21.

We cannot judge matters we do not understand or comprehend. Specifically, we cannot judge the hearts of men. God is the one who will bring to light the hidden things. We are also not to seek personal vengeance (condemnation). Vengeance belongs to God.

What is the danger to those assuming the role of judge? Read Romans 1:28-2:11, James 3:1 & 4:11-12.

The one who takes on the role of judge assume a position above the law. They no longer consider themselves to be under it, but over it and presume to possess the ability to judge men by its standards and mete out appropriate consequences. This is highly presumptuous and potentially blasphemous. God's law is a reflection of His holiness. How can we are less than holy presume a knowledge and righteousness belonging only to God? We put ourselves in great peril of personal judgment.

The judging Jesus condemns is the type that is beyond our role and capability. We are not called to pass judgment upon the hearts and minds of others, neither has God invested us with the ability to do so. With that said, we are to exercise good judgment over the areas God has placed in our realm of responsibility.

We already studied one example of the type of judging Jesus condemns in the Sermon on the Mount.

Review Matthew 5:21-22 and discuss how calling a brother Raca or a fool is an act of unjust judging.

Both insults assume a position of wisdom and responsibility not suited for men. The first insult, "Raca" means empty-headed or good for nothing. It is an insult of a brother's abilities. The second insult, "thou fool", is an accusation against their character. We are not equipped to make either judgment and as we read in the passage, there is a danger to the believer of receiving judgment from God.

How do we walk this line? There is actually a fabulous example in Scripture of one who clearly addressed sin without crossing the line and judging the heart of another. Read Job 2:7-10 and describe how he spoke to his wife. What can you learn from this? Job's wife clearly sinned by telling him to curse God and die. Job didn't accept it in a false pretence of love or react harshly to her. He addressed her sin clearly without trying to overstep the line and judge her heart. He told her that she spoke AS a foolish woman. He didn't call her a fool. Good for Job! God stamps His seal of approval on this statement when the Scripture reads, "In all this did not Job sin with his lips" (Job 2:10).

### Motives and Standards (7:2)

In verse one we established that there are certain areas God alone can judge. We are not equipped for or charged with that task. Yet, we can't walk away from this passage and assume that Jesus condemns

# The Gospel of Matthew

## SERMON ON THE MT: JUDGING (7:1-6)

all types of judging. As I already stated, Jesus is addressing both what men judge and how we judge. Verses two through five focus on how we should judge (or not judge).

Verse two warns us that we will be judged in the same way we judge and by the same standard we apply to others. Imagine standing before a judge with a hatred for Christians. Do you believe he would be impartial if he knew you were a Christian? What if you stood before an American judge who decided to impose laws and punishments from a foreign Islamic country? Would you be concerned about the standard they would be using to decide your fate? This is exactly the point Jesus makes.

Describe a judgmental spirit – **It is typically an attitude associated with a negative and critical person. They are usually quick to rush to judgment and harsh in their critique of others.**

Let's first discuss a judgmental spirit. Read Luke 18:1-5, the parable of the unjust judge. Describe his temperament. **He didn't care for anyone else beside himself. He wasn't concerned about pleasing God, nor was he concerned about men. He wasn't concerned with the widow's plea for help against one who had wronged her. He was self-consumed, which became his basis for finally heeding her plea. One who is judgmental has often succumbed to this selfish spirit. They are often unhappy people too!**

Now let's read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, the most complete description of Biblical love. Which qualities listed counter the judgmental spirit condemned by Christ? **Charity is not self-consumed but is concerned about the welfare of others. It isn't hasty but is patient. It doesn't have an eye of envy which can twist judgment of others. It is concerned with truth and righteousness rather than sin. It isn't easily provoked to anger and isn't automatically suspicious (believes all things). Love conquers the judgmental spirit condemned by Christ!**

**This is the goal: to be reproved by one who truly loves you and desires what is best for you.**

If we want to be judged in this manner by others, we must lead in this type of judgment.

We also need to talk about the haste, or quick judgment often accompanying a judgmental spirit. Read the following passages and explain the instruction given to us.

Proverbs 18:13 – **don't answer a matter before you hear it. Remember that there are always two sides to every story.**

Deut. 13:12-16 – **If you hear there is sin committed by someone else, don't assume it. Be careful and search out the matter yourself. If it proves to be true, then enact the appropriate consequences.**

The second principle established by Christ in Matthew 7:2 is, "with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again". Let's begin our discussion of measures and metes by defining the terms.

**Measure – *metron* – a limited portion or degree. It is the origin of our word, "meter" and means a standard of measure.**

# The Gospel of Matthew

## SERMON ON THE MT: JUDGING (7:1-6)

Mete – *meteo* – this is simply the verb form of the same Greek word used in “measure”. It is the act of measuring.

Proper measuring was a significant concern in the ancient world. The fair purchase and sale of goods relied upon the use of accurate scales. God addresses this issue throughout the Old Testament. Read the following passages and summarize their teaching.

Proverbs 11:1 – **A bad standard is an abomination to the Lord**

Proverbs 20:10 – **The use of different standards (favoritism) is an abomination to the Lord**

Leviticus 19:35-36 – **God considers the use of improper standards the same as being unjust. All injustice is an abomination to Him.**

The application of fair measures goes beyond scales and rulers. It applies to the standards we use to judge or discern. Read John 7:21-24 and Romans 14:1-10 and answer the following questions.

What is the problem Jesus and Paul address in these passages? **They were addressing the use of an extra-biblical or incorrectly interpreted standard to judge right and wrong. By extra-biblical, I mean something that is not explicitly taught in the Bible. By incorrectly interpreted, I am speaking of using a command or teaching out of context to impose rules and restrictions on others.**

What are some contemporary examples of this problem? **Baptism in running water vs. a baptistery, the type of music a church can sing, women wearing dresses to church vs. pants, whether a Christmas tree can be put up in a church, wine vs. grape juice at communion, etc...**

There are many church problems that would be resolved if we put this teaching into practice. This is why it is important for each member to learn to rightly discern truth. In fact, Hebrews 5:11-14 makes this point. Those who can only be fed milk are not able to clearly discern or judge between right and wrong. Those who are mature have exercised their senses to be able to judge righteous judgment.

**A church full of spiritual babes often results in unnecessary division over matters of no consequence.**

Apart from applying the right standard, we must also consider whether we apply it consistently. Favoritism is another malady that destroys the harmony of the church. Read James 2:1-4 and discuss how inconsistency harms a church. What can we do to prevent favoritism? **Favoritism, or inconsistently applying the standards of right and wrong, is an indication that we fear men more than God. It also indicates that we have a faulty understanding of the gospel itself. We do great harm to the truth when we apply it only when convenient and use a false standard in other circumstances. We must uphold God’s truth above all other standards by which men judge and emphasize that God’s way is the best way. Favoritism is often rampant when family members are involved. By upholding God’s standard at all times we encourage men to place their complete faith in Him.**

# The Gospel of Matthew

## SERMON ON THE MT: JUDGING (7:1-6)

There is a boomerang effect to judging. The same critical, hasty, and unmerciful spirit and standard we so quickly cast upon others will return to us. Read Judges 1:7 and Esther 7:7-10 and consider Abonibezek and Haman. How did the spirit and standard of their judgmental attitude return to them? **Haman was taken by the King and hanged for appearing to fall upon (either rape or harm) Queen Esther. The fact was that he was begging for his life, yet the king didn't take time to find out what he was doing. Similarly, Haman never took time to find out why Mordecai didn't bow to him (so as not to take it personally) but instead reacted based on his perception. Haman was hung upon the gallows he had made for Mordecai. Abonibezek received the same disgrace he had inflicted upon other kings.**

### Logs and Splinters (7:3-5)

Let's take a moment to review. Jesus has just condemned sinful judgment. Remember, He is not condemning all judgment, just the type that tries to judge things we cannot or should not judge (the hearts and motives of others) and improper judgment that is biased, hasty, and faulty. He now illustrates how this "bad judgment" doesn't just affect us, but touches others as well.

Unfortunately, we don't often keep our bad judgments to ourselves. We freely throw in our two cents about the cause of every else's problems and we fail to see our own. That is the purpose of this next illustration: the mote and beam, or perhaps better understood as "the splinter and the plank" in modern English.

What is the focus of this judgmental brother or sister? Read Luke 18:9-14.

**They are preoccupied by everyone else's problems. They are "beholding" and fixated upon the "sins" of others. These folks often see everyone else as the problem, or perhaps they acknowledge their sin because they know better than to deny it, but they see others as the "bigger problem" and don't feel an abiding conviction over their wrongs, at least not enough for heartfelt repentance and change.**

It is important to define key terms and in this passage, "considerest not" is a pivotal term.

Considerest not – *katanoeo* – to be out of your mind (not in a crazy way), to be unaware of something

How can we see others' sins so clearly yet not see our own? Read Matthew 15:10-14 and John 9:39-41.

**I would suggest that when we have the beam in our own eye, we cannot see or perceive many things, especially the sins of others, as well as we might think. In Matthew 15:10-14, the Pharisees were offended by Jesus' saying and judged His teaching as error. Jesus responded by calling them blind leaders of blind. It was their lack of personal humility and awareness that made them unable to judge others or their teachings.**

**Jesus is declaring that we cannot see clearly enough to pull the mote out of our brother's eye until the beam comes out of our own.**

# The Gospel of Matthew

## SERMON ON THE MT: JUDGING (7:1-6)

Does Jesus suggest that we should not be concerned about sin in our brother or sister's life?

Not at all; He only emphasizes the proper order. First get yourself right with God and then you will have the spiritual perspective necessary to help others. By getting right with God He is not implying perfection, but a genuine humility over our sin and failures.

We see harmony from Scriptures when it comes to this principle. Read the following passages and discuss what is being taught and its harmony with Jesus' teaching in Matthew 7:3-5.

James 1:19-25 – James condemns a judgmental attitude by telling us to be quick to hear and slow to speak and to be angry. He also says that if we only hear the Word but do not act upon it, we deceive our own selves. This harmonizes with the teaching of Jesus that says when we judge others but do not first judge ourselves, we are blind and are not equipped to help others.

Psalms 51:9-13 – David prayed for his own sins to be forgiven first; then sinners would be converted to God. David knew that he was ineffective as God's man for Israel until he first dealt with his own problems. This didn't require perfection, but repentance and forgiveness.

Galatians 6:1-3 – The undergirding principle of helping a brother or sister in Christ is love. A prideful and judgmental attitude is the antithesis of love. The spirit of humility must accompany reproof or the reproof will be misguided and cause more harm than good. This is exactly what Jesus suggests.

What happens to the cause of Christ when we possess a wrongfully judgmental attitude and do not first apply God's Word to our own hearts and lives? Read Romans 2:17-24. In short, we bring reproach upon the name of the Lord. The Jews were a prime example of this. Their legalistic standards were well known to the Roman world, but so was their sin. They were bought and sold and manipulated by their pride and greed. Their standard and their sin were both on display. Because of the contradiction, the Romans dismissed the power and glory of their God.

## Of Dogs and Pigs (7:6)

### UNCLEAN ANIMALS

In biblical times dogs were seldom kept as household pets in the way they are today. Except for those used as working animals to herd sheep, they were largely half-wild mongrels that acted as scavengers. They were dirty, greedy, snarling, and often vicious and diseased. They were dangerous and despised.

Swine were considered by Jews to be the epitome of uncleanness... Like the scavenging dogs, those swine were greedy, vicious, and filthy even by ordinary pig standards. If you came between them and their food they would likely turn and tear you to pieces with their tusks and sharp hooves.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Matthew 1-7, pp. 437-438.

# The Gospel of Matthew

## SERMON ON THE MT: JUDGING (7:1-6)

Giving what is holy to a dog seems to refer to giving the remains of a meat offering made to God to a dog. It is just inappropriate. Similarly, giving pearls to a swine may initially incite their interest because they may think it is food but when they realize it is not what they want, they will turn and rend you for it. The gospel of Matthew is the only place where this thought is found. That does not make it untrue, but does limit our ability to see how another gospel writer recorded the same teaching.

The term “dogs” is used elsewhere in Matthew in a similar way. Read Matthew 15:21-28 and discuss the similarities of the passages. **Both passages address giving something intended for another purpose to “dogs”. The dogs in Matthew 15:21-28 clearly refer to Gentiles, or those who are not God’s people.**

Still considering Matthew 15:21-28 and also the context of Matthew 7:6, what are the differences between the passages? **Matthew 15:21-28 concerns the purpose of Jesus’ ministry and the use of His time to spread the gospel to those outside of the nation of Israel. He was sent by His Father to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Matthew 7:6 is in the midst of a passage resolving conflict and sin with a brother or sister in Christ. While the passages have a similar ring, they are addressing different issues.**

Knowing that our definition of “dogs and swine” in Matthew 7:6 must harmonize with other Scriptures, review the following passages and discuss how they harmonize.

Proverbs 9:7-8 – **The one who tries to correct a scorner will find themselves scorned**

Proverbs 23:9 – **Don’t waste a rebuke or wisdom on a fool.**

Acts 28:23-29 – **Paul turned away from the Jews after they refused to hear the gospel**

2 Timothy 4:14-15 – **Paul warned Timothy of Alexander the Coppersmith**

Who are the dogs and swine in Matthew 7:6? **The dogs and swine appear to be unbelievers, especially unbelievers that are rejecting Christ and God’s Word. Trying to rebuke them is an exercise in futility.**

What are the meat and pearls? **The meat and pearls are God’s truths. This isn’t speaking of the gospel, which we are to preach to the lost, but rather the truths of God’s Word that guide our lives. Trying to get a lost person to think and act like a saved person is fruitless.**

How does this passage fit into the context of Matthew 7:1-6? **We were just instructed how to have a godly attitude that will allow us to help with sin in the lives of fellow believers. Jesus is clarifying that he isn’t telling us to confront all the sins and issues of unbelievers. They won’t be receptive!**

Can we apply Matthew 7:6 to believers, especially those who are part of our church? **No. This is written about unbelievers. We are given Matthew 18, Galatians 6, and other passages which speak of how we should lovingly pursue righteousness in the body and not give up on one another, unless exclusion becomes necessary. We cannot classify our brothers and sisters and swine and dogs.**