

## Matt 7.1-12 | Jesus the New Moses (5) – don't judge others

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### PRAY

Matthew's gospel is all heading towards...

**28.19-20** *...go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and **teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.***

*teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.*

**[ask]** So what's the link between the Sermon on the Mount and the end of Matthew's Gospel?

As more and more disciples went out obeying Matt 28 ...what exactly were they to teach new disciples?? Well a big part of that must be... the Sermon on the Mount – teaching for new disciples in living the Life of Jesus' Kingdom.

So... we come to the 3<sup>rd</sup> and final chapter of the Sermon on the Mount. And what's it all been about so far?

**1. vertical:** living right with God. So **Ch6** – giving, fasting and prayer - the disciple of Jesus needs to have a strong relationship with God... in order to...

**2. horizontal:** live right in front of others. So **Ch5** – murder, adultery, divorce, revenge etc.

**5.16** *...let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*

**[PPT]** -> disciples: *come in* to God (through Jesus)... *go out* into the world

But... **Ch7** doesn't so fit neatly into this *come in/go out* structure. So what's it doing here? Look at **v1**, Jesus says: *'Do not judge...'* Why might judging be an issue? Well imagine you're Peter. Jesus has taught you lots on how he wants you and other disciples to live in his kingdom...

*... 'Don't murder, don't hate, don't commit adultery, don't lust, don't take revenge, love your neighbour'* – why might there be temptation to judge?

*'I do hope Andrew is listening to this; and James really needs to sort out his lust problem, and John – O boy is he terrible with his neighbours! I'm just glad they're all here to hear this...'*

So I think **Ch7** is... Jesus teaching on... how to **respond** to his teaching, because it's no good hearing Jesus if we **respond** to him **badly**.

And who in particular is Jesus directing this at? Remember **5.1**, Jesus' primary audience was *his disciples* though... *the crowd* was there too. So look at **vv3-5**: 'your brother', 'your brother', 'your brother' 3 times, and then in **v11** 'your Father...' The focus of the first half of **Ch7** seems to have the disciples in view, whereas in the second half, **vv13-29**, Jesus seems to turn more to *the crowd*.

So... **vv1-12**: How do *disciples*, (brothers & sisters) respond rightly to Jesus' teaching: we get 3 *specific* principles ... plus 1 'belt & braces' one.

Principle no.1:

**vv1-5: Teach Jesus' teaching ...only as a humble pupil**

I remember as a boy playing football after church... and the older folk complaining to my dad because... Sunday was supposed to be a day of rest! I got judged by *old* Christians.

But... *I too* am guilty of *judging*: I've looked down on other Christians for all sorts of things... smoking, poor theology... and, being raised in an independent church, I was appalled at any Christian who attended... the Church of England!!

**But self-assessment time: [ask]** what makes *you* judge (look down your nose at) your Christian brothers and sisters?

- how they raise their children, their use of money, commitment to church activities, way of speaking, use of leisure time?

Or... we can go completely the other way... and judge each other for being *too* righteous: *'Oh she's so religious, he's always quoting the Bible, what a goody-goody!'*

But Jesus says...

**v1:** Disciples!... *do not judge...*

But... the issues we've mentioned are really only judgment calls, aren't they. But when Jesus says *'Do not judge'*, he's primarily talking about...

sin - don't look down on, or think less of your brother or sister when  
*...they sin. (!!)*

And why shouldn't we? – well **v2** has the incentive:

***v2: For... in the same way as you judge others... you will be judged  
and with the measure you use... it will be measured to you.***

'Measure' – it's the language of the market place. A flour-seller pours out flour into a measuring cup. But... they could easily increase their profits by using a smaller cup. But... the market inspector is watching: if they're caught they'll lose their stall.

And God is the ultimate market inspector. When it comes to judgment, His is the last word not yours; the final measure on your fellow Christian... and ***you*** ...will come from ***His*** cup.

So... let your cup of – not flour, but grace towards sinners - be large... overflowing... or God's might not be towards you!

Now, on paper this all makes sense: we should just stop judging one another. But there's a problem... when it comes to spotting another Christian's sins... we have the eyes of hawks; but with our own we're more like moles.

So when God looks down... how does He see our lop-sided judging...

**vv3-4:** *'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? <sup>4</sup> 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?*

As a kid, when I got something in my eyes, I'd run to Mum, and she'd get her hanky, fashion it to a point and magically extricate the offending particle. Well just imagine me running to mum only to find a broom handle protruding from her eye. It's a hilarious image – and so is this: Jesus here is telling a joke – the disciples would've been in stitches.

But ...just as your laughing at it, it hits you – this is so true. And suddenly it's not funny ...just ugly.

A number of years ago I was talking with a couple of friends about the dangers of a certain sin, and I reminded one of them how he'd an issue with it back at Uni. And the other one turned to me and said, 'Yes but Tim... so did you.' And I was speechless – I'd completely blocked it out. I'd hidden my own sin... *even from myself!*

And this *is* the ugly reality of *your* heart too. Be honest now, as the 2 Richards took us through Matthew 5 & 6 – didn't you at some point think, '*this is just what so-and-so needs to hear; I hope **they're** listening!!*' I did!

We love to think we're those described by Jesus who ...*hunger and thirst for righteousness (5.6)* but more often than not we're hungering for righteousness in... ***others, not ourselves!***

And that should rightly cut us to the heart – hypocrisy is ugly... but... condemnation is ***not*** the final word here. **v5** immediately gives us 2 steps forward:

First: *take the plank out of your own eye*

Second: ***then** remove the speck from your brother's eye*

First... look *yourself* in the eye! Start by seeing your own sin and throw yourself on the grace of Christ. And it's clear from v5 that hungering for righteousness in others ...is a *good* thing! But... we can only pass on Jesus' teaching ...as one whose first sat under it **as a humble pupil**.

I'm guessing there are a number here who think, *'Teaching the Bible is for others, not me? I'm not clever enough, or righteous enough!'* Actually, the best Bible teacher is not the one who thinks they're perfect, but the one who knows they're not because... Jesus' teaching has addressed them.

If that's you then... be ready ...to teach!

Principle no.2:

**v6: Preach (Jesus' teaching)... *only* to subjects of the kingdom**

In **Matthew 28**, Jesus sends his disciples out to teach ...*disciples* his teachings. And that's the point of...

**v6:** *'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 turn and tear you to pieces.*

*Dogs and pigs* was Jewish shorthand for... *a Gentile*. And so in NT terms: unbelievers, those who **don't** belong to Jesus' Kingdom yet. Pigs prefer acorns to pearls. Yes, the Sermon on the Mount is precious to *disciples*... but **un**believers might just trample all over it!

Don't expect interest... but **v6** says don't expect indifference either, expect assault! And if you've ever tried sharing Christian values online, you'll most likely have experienced just such an onslaught.

So, if you're passing on Jesus' words... be ready for attack! But also... be discerning. People need to become Christians *before* they see Jesus' teaching as pearls.

And I think this means... the task for the church is not primarily to change society. Yes of course we should take advantage of our right to vote, and especially to be a voice for those without one – like unborn babies, and school children being taught that *homosexuality is good*. But ultimately politics and online campaigns can't change people's hearts... only the gospel can. Put your best efforts... into sharing the gospel.

And here's another implication: **Christian** brothers and sisters – be ready to receive pearls! Imagine someone at church comes to me and says, *'Tim, I heard you calling someone a fool... but the Sermon on the Mount says that's wrong.'* What would my natural reaction be? 'Don't interfere; what's it got to do with you?' - something like that.

But hold on... they've just handed me **a pearl**, I should receive it as precious treasure. So don't shoot the messenger; don't trample the good teaching of Jesus and turn and attack a Christian sister or brother who is so hungry for righteousness that they're ready to speak boldly... we should value that!

So...

*1: Teach Jesus' teaching... only as a humble pupil*

*2: Preach it... only to subjects of the kingdom*

And principle no.3...

**vv7-11: Apply it... with the Father's willing help**

*<sup>7</sup> 'Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. <sup>8</sup> For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.*

What's this doing here? Matthew has already given us a section on *how to pray* (6.5-15). Also... the same passage appears in **Luke 11**, but... ***there*** the gift to be asked for is named - *the Holy Spirit*. ***Here*** there's no

mention of what to ask for. Why does Matthew record the same teaching but in a different way?

Well, over the 3 years of Jesus' ministry he must have repeated the same teachings 100s of times, **and** sometimes used the same ones but for different purposes in different contexts.

So, given the context here, what might Jesus be talking about asking God for?

Well remember, Jesus knows he won't be around to teach the disciples forever – by the end of Matthew's gospel he's returned to heaven!!

So imagine Peter wanting to make new disciples – and he remembers Jesus saying, *“The eye is the lamp of the body...”* but what on earth was he getting at? What should Peter do?

v7: *Ask; seek; knock...*

**[PPT]** James 1.5 sounds very similar...

*If any of you lacks **wisdom**, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.*

And we too have Jesus' teaching here... but we don't always understand it ...and neither does it cover every situation we might face, e.g. what should a Christian think about recycling, or online dating, or drinking?:  
*'Jesus, why didn't you mention Brexit in the Sermon on the Mount??'*

But here's his answer: when you're stuck... go to your Father in Heaven and... **ask!**

And in fact... that's what we do here: before someone preaches, or at the beginning of GG, or before reading our Bibles in the morning... we ask God to help us understand and apply it. ***We need the Father's help*** to get Jesus' teaching right.

And we ought to ask with confidence. Look at...

**v7:** *...it will be given ...you will find ...it will be opened*

But why such confidence? **vv9-11:** Because of ***who*** God is...

*'Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? <sup>10</sup> Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? <sup>11</sup> If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!*

Imagine Isaac telling Ben, 'Dad, I'm so hiungry!!' And Ben replies: '*Here you go Izie, tuck in to this pebble, and don't say I never give you anything!*'

It would be like something out of a Roald Dahl book!!

No, fathers (generally) are hard-wired to ***look after*** their kids. And if that's true of earthly fathers like us '*though we are evil*' **v11**- i.e. debilitated by sin as ***we*** are, then how much more so with God who is perfect.

So of course, if you ask for a ***good*** gift, He ***will*** give it gladly. And so... is asking for wisdom to know and follow Jesus' teaching a ***good*** gift... or a ***bad*** one? ***Good*** of course!

So *Jesus' teaching* – how should we respond?

*1: Teach it... only as a humble pupil*

*2: Preach it... only to subjects of the kingdom*

*and 3. Apply it... with the Father's willing help*

And finally...

### **The 'Belt & braces' principle**

**v12:** *...in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you...*

This is often called the ***Golden Rule***. And people tend to think this is just common teaching across all religions and cultures. Actually, *the negative form* does appear in a number of ancient cultures:

*'Do **not** do to others what you yourself dislike'*

...but that isn't so stringent. In fact that allows you to do ...nothing at all! No, what Jesus asks you for is far more demanding: ***do to others what you would have them do to you*** - i.e. treat others as ***you*** would like to be treated. And this, says Jesus, *sums up the Law and the Prophets* – the whole OT!

Later in **Matthew 22 (p991)**, he says...

*37 ...Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” ...and...*

*39 ...Love your neighbour as yourself. 40 All the Law and the Prophets (the whole OT) hang on these two commandments.*

Notice the ***vertical***... followed buy the ***horizontal***!

And surely *Love your neighbour as yourself* – **is** just another way of saying... *'do to others what you would have them do to you.'*

But in **Gal 5**, Paul goes a step further; he completely skips the first part...

### **[PPT Gal 5.14]**

*...the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: **'Love your neighbour as yourself.'***

The 2 parts collapse into 1 because when you do the **vertical**: *Love the Lord God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength* ...it will be shown in the **horizontal**: *Loving your neighbour as yourself!*

Which all means this...

- if I truly 'do to others as I would have them do to me,'
- in short, if I consider others ...an **extension** of myself
- **then** ...I will be keeping God's law and so loving Him... with all my being!

So... are you doing this?

...

Well, I think if anyone said 'yes', 100% - they'd be deluding themselves.

So how **are** we to respond to this? If you're a Christian here this morning, I think this belt & braces summary is a signpost: '*head in this direction... but ...don't think you're there yet.*'

If at any point you read the Sermon on the Mount and say '*Yes, I do that...*', then look again to the belt & braces summary and realise, '*Ah, no. I still have a ways to go.*'

If you're not a Christian here this morning, the impossibly high standard of this, '*Love others as much as yourself*'... **should** drive you to despair!! But... that's a good thing. Because God doesn't want **your** success, all the good you've done – in fact the Bible describes our best deeds as 'filthy rags' to Him. He wants people in despair who cry out to Him, utterly helpless. Because, only if we come with empty hands can he fill them with what we really need: all that Jesus has done!

**We** fail the impossibly high standards of God's law, but Jesus didn't: he truly loved others as himself. So he lived the life we couldn't... and died to take the punishment for our failure. With Jesus, your failure can be his, and his fulfilment of all of God's law... can be yours... if your trust is wholly in him.

**Pause**

**Pray**

## Questions:

1. Which of the 3 (+1) principles do you find most challenging as you seek to pass on Jesus' teaching to others? Why?
2. Is there anything from the Sermon on the Mount (Chs 5-6) that you quickly applied to someone else instead of addressing it to yourself?
3. Are you ready to receive pearls of rebuke from other Christians? Are you ready to give them (lovingly)?