

## Matthew 7:6: Don't Preach the Gospel...Sometimes

### Intro:

- Difficulty in evangelism is knowing how much to say/push, when to let it go.
- One hand: we are commanded to preach the gospel
- **Matt 28:19-20:** Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”
- **Acts 4:29** - the disciples pray for boldness to proclaim the gospel
- Other hand: there are times when it seems unwise
  - When people ask us to stop
  - We are around co-workers or family who clearly hate anything gospel related
  - Those who are hyper-sensitive to anything religious
- The gospel is offensive: sin, holiness of God, “we know the truth”
- Q: How do we know when to keep proclaiming the gospel or when we're wasting breath?
- Q: Do we keep irritating the person who's rejected us? Are we just cowards if we don't keep preaching until people hate us?
- Q: Do we have to correct every foolish thing a person would say about religion/Jesus/Bible/politics?
- Jesus doesn't just have an opinion on this, he actually commands us about this.
- Gist: Difference between non-Christian and anti-Christian / don't know the Bible and hate the Bible / agnostic and militant atheistic.
- Wise followers of Jesus can tell the difference, and we don't seek to persuade those who hate the Lord.
- Jesus says there are times when we no longer preach the gospel to hostile people as an act of God's judgement.

### Context

- Some connection between **Vss. 1-5** and **6**.
- **Vss. 1-5**, the goal is to unhypocritically remove the speck - the sin - from your brother
- Brother = a follower of Jesus, who should want this surgery done.
- It's not pretty or easy, but Jesus commands that within Christianity we are to help our brother remove the speck of sin.
- **Vs. 6:** There are people for whom we are to never attempt to remove the log, never to correct.
- “But always we need to correct where there's sin.” No we don't.
- **Prov. 9:7-8:** Whoever corrects a scoffer gets himself abuse, and he who reproves a wicked man incurs injury. Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you; reprove a wise man, and he will love you.
- Some people are impossible to reason with / refuse correction / refuse dialogue.
- **Prov. 1:22:** How long, O simple ones, will you **love** being simple? How long will scoffers **delight** in their scoffing and fools **hate** knowledge?
- **Proverbs 12:1** (NIV): Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge,  
• but whoever hates correction is stupid.
- Some people really do love their stupidity and foolishness.
- Try talking to SJWs / rioters / transgender advocates.
- And often - with good hearts - we think we can win them over.
- We'll be the reasonable ones! / We'll be their friends! / Surely they'll see our love and genuineness and give us an honest chance to show them Jesus.
- Yeah right.
- What Jesus is talking about here is essentially the NT version of Proverbs - except he's talking about the gospel.
- There are times when the Lord Jesus himself tells us, don't tell people the gospel message.
- Don't talk about sin / judgment / hell / atonement / forgiveness / obedience / faith / grace.
- All the precious truths we hold so dear, Jesus says there comes a time when we withhold that as part of God's act of judgment on a scoffing world.
- So what I want to do is just ask 4 questions about the passage to unpack what Jesus is getting at here.

### 1) What are the holy things and the pearls? Read 6

- We've all heard the phrase “pearls before swine” - but what does it mean?

- What are the pearls / what is holy?
- Two ways of saying the same thing.
- Now, I've already tipped my hand that the holy thing and the pearls are the gospel.
- But don't take my word for it, let's make a couple of observations:
- 1 - Whatever the holy thing is and whatever the pearls are - **we have** them; they are ours.
- These are things we possess and we can either give them out or not.
- Sometimes we are commanded to do so, other times we are commanded not to - as is here.
- 2 - Whatever the pearls are, they are extremely valuable.
- Most think of diamonds or platinum as the most expensive/rare - and that's true today.
- Most people today don't even think of pearls when it comes to value or costliness.
- But in ancient times that wasn't the case; pearls were more valuable. (*Osborne, Matt. 7:6*)
- **1 Tim. 2:9:** Ladies are exhorted not to wear pearls or gold - because it would because in ancient times it was so over-the-top lavish, it would be like showing up in Ferrari to church decked out in Gucci.
- Pearls are actually so valuable it is used in the picture of heaven that has 12 gates that basically massive pearls (**Rev. 21:21**)
- 3 - Jesus also describes what we have as holy: "Do not give to the dogs what is holy / sacred / precious."
- Pearls are valuable, but things that are holy belong in the domain of God.
- Either you have to be holy to approach God, or something that is holy has come from God.
- Holy is a religious word.
- It means not common, not normal, not for ordinary use.
- III: Ladies, bear with me: A wedding dress is about the most impractical piece of clothing a woman will ever buy. When most ladies get married they use their wedding dress just once. Hundreds - if not thousands - of dollars on a dress you'll wear for a few hours. You don't see a lot of ladies hitting the movies in the wedding dress. You don't see them mowing the yard or out for a run or working on their transmission in their wedding dress. Why? Because it's holy, it's sacred. It's clean and pure. And that's what it represents.
- The thing that Jesus is talking about is both unbelievably valuable and incredibly holy.
- It is pure and set apart by God as precious and we don't just pull it out for any old situation.
- What is the holy thing we have? What are the pearls? What is the most valuable thing that we have as followers of Jesus that we could give to other people?
- It is the Gospel of the Kingdom that Jesus has come down proclaiming.
- And we have that Gospel as well.
- "The consensus understanding of this is that the "holy ... pearls" are the gospel truths and that this is a mission setting." (*Osborne, Matthew, pg. 259*)
- We have the message of life eternal, infinite inheritance, communion with God Almighty, forgiveness of sin - that holy message is of infinite value.
- The one thing all followers of Jesus have that we can either give away or keep is the gospel of the Kingdom.
- We have no more valuable possession than the gospel truth.
- **Turn to Matt. 13:45-46** - notice here how Jesus equates the Kingdom with pearls. **Read**
- This parable is about the all surpassing value of the Kingdom of God - someone would be willing to **gladly** sell everything he had to get it.
- Because whatever we had to sell or give up to get it, it would be of infinite gain to us.
- Back in **Chap 7**, the pearl isn't the Kingdom itself, but the truths to get into the Kingdom that Jesus is talking about.
- Listen: the gospel message is more valuable than all the pearls and gold and jewelry and money in all the world. It's better than the best vacation, best house, best computer.
- What does it profit a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Answer: nothing!
- It gains you nothing to have \$100 Trillion dollars if at the end you go to hell.
- We have the message of the gospel - that God sent his son Jesus to die on the cross in our place for our sins, rose for our justification to make us a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works, and who will inherit the world and reign with Christ.
- There is no more valuable truth, no more precious reality than the holy pearls of the gospel message.
- So the pearls and the holy thing is the gospel of the Kingdom. The gospel that Jesus is Messiah and has given us eternal life through faith in him.
- So if the pearls and the holy things are the gospel truths...

## 2) Who Are the Dogs/Swine?

- Historical context: We think of dogs as cute and cuddly and protectors.
- In Judaism both dogs and pigs were unclean, unholy, dirty, filthy, and untouchable.
- How we view skunks is how most Jews viewed dogs.
- Dogs: scavengers who roamed trash heaps and were usually covered in filth, often running around in packs.
- Rich man & Lazarus - dogs licked Lazarus's wounds, adding disgust to his situation (**Luke 16:21**)
- **2 Pet. 2:22:** What the true proverb says has happened to them: "The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire."
- In the OT the term dog occasionally referred to a male prostitute.
- **Matt 13:21-28:** Canaanite woman asks for her daughter to be healed and Jesus says he doesn't give the children's bread to the dogs.
- Jesus says: You're not Jewish, I didn't come here to heal Gentile outsiders. She persists and her faith amazes Jesus and he heals the girl. She's an outsider, but an outsider who has great faith in the Messiah.
- And dogs were considered violent - not like today's domesticated dogs; they'd tear you apart as soon as look at you.
- Paul calls unbelievers who require circumcision to be saved dogs in **Phil 3:2** because that is the highest insult he can conjure up.
- Pigs weren't much different, they were big, wild and unclean - utterly despised by the Jews.
- I remember working at a doctor's office in high school and a Jewish family came in while we were having a party. And we offered them some pizza - pepperoni pizza. And the mom told the kid that they didn't eat it because it would make them sick.
- That's a bad reason - it avoids the theology altogether - but it points out how resolute Jews were abstain from anything related to pigs.
- Because of the unclean and unholy nature of dogs and pigs, these terms actually became a term of derision for non-Jews.
- So dogs and pigs were outsiders; Paul picks this up when referring to Jews who persecuted Christians:
- Now, we need to understand that Jesus is not talking about **all** unbelievers, else we'd never preach the gospel.
- He's talking about people who are violently, persistently opposed.
- Calvin: Those who reject the gospel with vicious scorn and hardened contempt. (Carson. *Matthew*, note on 7:6)
- Survey on Paul's MO for preaching the gospel. He preaches until he's rejected, then he moves on.
- **Turn to Acts 13:44-47; 14:1-7; 17:1-10; 18:1-7** - Paul preaching in Corinth realizes that at some point you stop telling people. **Read**
- Why does Paul stop? Because they are dogs. They are reviling him, opposing him. He's not gaining any ground so he leaves. He does what Jesus tells him to do.
- Interestingly, the synagogue leader became a Christian and left too.
- More interesting: Is that all hope is not lost just because we stop preaching the gospel to those who revile us because the new synagogue leader in Corinth comes to faith in Jesus (**1 Cor. 1:1**)
- Paul himself was a violent persecutor of the church yet God saved him.
- But wait, you say, back in **Acts 7** Stephen kept preaching even though they were hard-hearted.
- True, but he was already done-for - he was a dead man so might as well go out preaching.
- Listen dogs and pigs - people who hate Jesus / Bible / God / religion - they don't want reason and logic and kindness.
- They hate God.
- So to be clear, in Jesus's words, dogs or pigs are those who violently and forcefully oppose the gospel
- We're not talking every unbeliever.
- We're talking about the ones who are anti-Christian, anti-Jesus; persecutors of the faith - those are the dogs and pigs Jesus has in mind.
- But why use this language?
- **Turn back to Matt 7:6** and look at what will happen.

### 3) What's the danger in preaching to hard-hearted people? Read 7:6

- So you jump on Facebook and a friend has posted a meme about how dumb belief in God is and how obvious evolution is and how crazy the Bible is.
- Or you're at a party and you saddle up to a group of people and they're all talking about the ridiculous religion is and how only weak people need God.

- These people are obviously hostile and it won't go well.
- Do you post a reply? Do you jump in to defend the honor of Jesus and ruin the work party?
- The answer is absolutely not.
- Jesus gives us 2 reasons to not reply. Two reasons to walk away.
- 1) the pigs will trample the pearls - what does that mean?
- It means the precious gospel truths will be trashed;
- **Mark it** down: you will not win the argument!
- There might be people who sympathize with you, but the gospel will be painted in such a bad light - worse than before you spoke - that Jesus will actually be slandered all the more.
- Mob mentality does not respond to reason.
- Pure hatred and foolishness is not overcome by logic and explanation.
- By definition these people love their foolishness.
- **Prov. 13:1:** A wise son hears his father's instruction, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.
- **Prov. 29:8:** Scoffers set a city aflame.
- That's the issue, they'll burn the gospel down.
- Not that they are a real threat to the gospel.
- But they will bury you in red herring and illogical arguments and foolish characterizations.
- They'll misrepresent every story they've ever heard about the Bible.
- And you'll never get a chance to get a word in - they will pile on / insult / twist every word.
- And then they'll go tell all their friends how they told off that bigoted Christian and they'll all swap I-hate-Jesus stories and talk about how the Bible is full of contradictions.
- "Those idiots just believe fairy tales."
- Straight up, this is what happens.
- The pigs will trample the pearls of the gospel.
- The second reason Jesus says don't give this to them is that they turn to attack you. **Read 6**
- 2) The attack will go from the gospel to you directly - personal.
- You're the bigot who hates all gays and thinks they should be stoned.
- You're the science denier who thinks the world is flat and thinks women should never talk, stay at home and just make babies.
- You're the paranoid anti-vax homeschooling fool who thinks the system is out to get them.
- This is where they go from attacking the Bible and biblical truth to attacking us personally.
- They'll shame you on social media / your name will be mud.
- Most of you remember Justin Peters who preaches against prosperity theology.
- He posted some comments on Twitter last year and the response was so overwhelming and vile that he left Twitter. All done.
- His wife saw what people were saying and slandering him and reviling him and she just couldn't take it anymore.
- People will lose jobs - you remember the Atlanta fire chief who was forced to resign because he passed out a book that said homosexuality was a sin? (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2015/01/06/atlantas-fire-chief-fired-following-controversy-over-his-religious-book/>)
- He wasn't even looking give pearls to pigs, but they got ahold of them anyway.
- Our society loves cancel culture. Shaming culture. Mob destruction culture for even a whiff of Christian belief.
- You guys know that I'm not a doomsday kind of guy, but we really need to be wise as we consider where we go, what we say, what professions we take part in, who we work for.
- The virtue signaling culture we live in has no patience with Christianity or anything close to biblical worldview.
- If you're not adamantly pro-LGBTQ+ giving out free contraceptives and tithing to Planned Parenthood in your BLM shirt you are the enemy.
- They trample the pearls of the gospel and then tear you to pieces.
- That's not alarmist, those are simply Jesus's words.
- John Bunyan wrote about the mob mentality in Pilgrim's Progress when Faithful was killed in the city of Vanity Fair - reason and honest argument didn't save him. It was mob rule.
- There has always been a portion of society that is actively opposed to the gospel.
- There's no good that comes from trying to tell them about Jesus.
- It gives no honor to him.
- When we try to oppose scoffers we get needless abuse and God is not honored.

- Let me be very clear again: There are times when Jesus, our Lord who died for our sins and rose again and reigns even now, says don't preach the gospel.

#### 4) Is this really a command? **Read 7:6**

- The short answer is yes.
- Greek: "Don't even think about preaching the gospel to them."
- There are 2 ways to say "no" in Greek: οὐ and μή - the latter is the stronger way of saying no.
- A.T. Robertson wrote, "If οὐ denies the fact, μή denies the idea." (Grammar of the Greek New Testament, p. 1167] - Amazing!
- Jesus: there will be times where we are commanded to not even think about preaching the gospel.
- Maybe there's some joker who's dragging Jesus's name through the mud and we think we're going to shut his mouth.
- Jesus says: don't even think about it.
- Yes the gospel truths will be trampled, yes we will be slandered; but more is that this is a command.
- One day his mouth will be stopped.
- Most of the time we do preach but not always.
  
- You know what this is?
- It's a type of divine judgment that we soberly take part in.
- There are times throughout the Bible when God just says: look, I'm done with you.
- No more truth, no more grace, no more revelation.
- Romans 1 talks about how God gives people over to sexual sin, then homosexual sin, then a depraved mind and they're done.
- You know the parables we all love so much?
- You know why Jesus speaks in parables?
- So that people won't understand what he's trying to say; the elect will, but those outside the Kingdom won't.
- It's judgment.
- There is a judgment aspect to those who ridicule and mock God - they get no more light, no more truth.
- That doesn't mean we never come back to them, one day we might.
- Or someone else might.
- But for now we shut it down and move on.
- If someone is curious about the gospel / ambivalent / pushes back a little / you're not sure, go preach.
- But someone who is reviling you / openly mocks God, the Lord says don't preach; move on.
- Their fate might not be sealed, but they are not deserving of the precious pearls of the gospel.
- And we move on to someone else.
- So go preach faithfully, know that God will do his work.
- And even those that are denied pearls for now, may in time come to faith in Jesus.

#### **Pray**