

Sermon: “A Community that Judges Rightly”

Series: Being a Community Formed in Jesus' Name

Bible Text: [Matthew 7:1-6](#)

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As the content of [our sermon from Sunday](#) unfolded, several things became clear to us from the teachings of Jesus. First, judgment is not the casting aside of all forms of judgment always. Rather, it was the rejection of assuming the seat of God. What the text does not forbid, however, is using right and good moral discernment when it comes to how we engage with people. The moral discernment, Jesus says, should begin with us first. That is why planks should be removed before specks are plucked.

Within all of this though is the question that often comes... “BUT WAIT!”

While attempting to be circumspect in our actions and measured in our responses, we can many times still be quite unsure about the **wisdom** of should someone be “confronted” or not.

And so we reach the place where we see [Matthew 7:6](#). On the surface, this passage falls into what many commentators call the “hard sayings of Jesus,” because on the one hand there is a very jarring linguistic shift in the tone of [Matthew 7:1-5](#) to what is said here in [Matthew 7:6](#). How do we make sense of this text? Isn't Jesus abandoning what he just warned is followers to not do?

Commentators and scholars differ on how to interpret, and thus apply, this text. Below are the two prevailing interpretations, and as you will see, we believe the second interpretation is likely the correct one.

QUESTION—What is the relationship of this verse to what precedes it?

1. There is little or no relation to the preceding section, or the connection is unclear. The transition is abrupt. It is an unrelated proverbial saying of Jesus.

2. There is some thematic connection, which is that Jesus' followers should show discernment in thinking critically. It balances Jesus' command not to judge others by warning that they should not extend the range of that command too far. Jesus is showing that although he does not want them to be hypocrites, he also does not expect them to be so endlessly patient such that they lose discernment. In sacred matters some critical thinking must still be exercised. They should attain a balance between being too severe in judgment and too lax in discernment. Avoiding haughty judgment shouldn't lead to throwing sacred things to dogs.

(Tehan, Thomas, and David Abernathy. *An Exegetical Summary of the Sermon on the Mount*. 2nd ed. Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2008.)

If you look at what Jesus is saying, both the terms dogs and pigs to a predominantly Jewish audience would be understood as unholy outsiders. The Israelites in Jesus' day would have simply shorthanded that the Gentiles were “dogs,” and pigs were ceremonially unclean and thus not to be trifled with by the Jews.

The parallelism of that which is holy (on the one hand) and pearls (on the other hand) can be seen through the rest of Scripture as Jesus commending the message and mandate of the Kingdom of God. In [Matthew 13:45-46](#), Jesus speaks of a man who discovers a pearl (the Kingdom of God) and goes and sells all that he has so that he may possess it.

Paul in [Philippians 3:17-21](#) speaks of those who are enemies of Christ and the cross. He says that in the end, their god is their belly, and their end is destruction. Imagine the picture that Jesus is giving his disciples here when he asks them to envision giving a hungry dog something that can't satisfy his carnal cravings... or a pig a pearl instead of a filling meal.

When you think about how we apply this passage, we must think in terms of **prudence**.

- What is the stomach of the person that we are confronting concerning their sin?
- Have they been transformed by grace to be a follower of Jesus?
- If not, why would a kingdom from beyond be their goal when really all they want to do is be satisfied in the hear and now. They do not have eyes to see, they do not have ears to hear, they do not have hearts that understand. So why would we go confronting the littles issues in their life, when the biggest issue is that they are outside of the Kingdom of God? They need Jesus first. The rest can come later.

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But if we are confronting someone who is inside the family, who has been made clean by the blood of the new covenant, then we should go in such a way as to communicate that we are a needy people... one beggar showing another beggar where we found bread. Going with a posture that demonstrates that we are, in all likelihood, the more grace-needy of the bunch. There is a Spirit-born compassion within us that yearns to communicate to others the life giving joy that we have experienced when our sin... ALL of our sin... was pardoned.

Our mourning was turned to dancing, not because the hammer of the law was dropped upon our shoulders, but rather because the hand of love was pierced and outstretched on a cross, paying our penalty and absorbing the wrath meant for us.

Jesus' words to us here are sobering. Those outside the kingdom won't find their souls satisfied by the kingdom until their hearts have been transformed and they have been brought inside the kingdom.

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