

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown
Bible Study Notes
7-19-23

Matthew 7

Judging Others – Verses 1-2

¹ “Do not judge, or you too will be judged. ² For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

7:1-2 Jesus tells us to examine our own motives and conduct instead of judging others. The traits that bother us in others are often the habits we have ourselves. Our bad habits and behavior patterns are the very ones that we most want to change in others. Do you find it easy to magnify others' faults while excusing your own? If you are ready to criticize someone, check to see if you deserve the same criticism. Judge yourself first, and then lovingly forgive and help your neighbor.

An Illustration Of Jesus' Principle Regarding Judging – Verses 3-5

³ “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? ⁴ 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? ⁵ You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

7:1-5 Jesus' statement, “Do not judge,” is against the kind of hypocritical, judgmental attitude that tears others down in order to build oneself up. It is not a blanket statement to overlook wrong behavior of others but a call to be discerning rather than negative. Jesus said to expose false prophets (7:15-23), and Paul taught that we should exercise church discipline (1 Corinthians 5:1-2) and trust God to be the final Judge (1 Corinthians 4:3-5).

Balancing Love With Discernment – Verse 6

⁶ “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.

7:6 Pigs were unclean animals according to God's law (Deuteronomy 14:8). Anyone who touched an unclean animal became “ceremonially unclean” and could not go to the temple to worship until the uncleanness was removed. Jesus says that we should not entrust holy teachings to unholy or unclean people. It is futile to try to teach holy concepts to people who don't want to listen and will only tear apart what we say. We should not stop giving God's Word to unbelievers, but we should be wise and discerning in our witnessing, so that we will not be wasting our time.

Jesus Invites Us To Keep On Asking, Seeking And Knocking – Verses 7-8

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

7:7-8 Jesus tells us to persist in pursuing God. People often give up after a few halfhearted efforts and conclude that God cannot be found. But knowing God takes faith, focus, and follow-through, and Jesus assures us that we will be rewarded. Don't give up in your efforts to seek God. Continue to ask him for more knowledge, patience, wisdom, love, and understanding. He will give them to you.

Jesus Illustrates The Giving Nature Of God – Verses 9-11

9 “Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 11 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!

7:9-10 The child in Jesus' example asked his father for bread and fish—good and necessary items. If the child had asked for a poisonous snake, would the wise father have granted his request? Sometimes God knows we are praying for “snakes” and does not give us what we ask for, even though we persist in our prayers. Nor will God give us “stones” or “snakes” instead of what we need. As we learn to know God better as a loving Father, we learn to ask for what is good for us, and then he grants it.

7:11 Christ is showing us the heart of God the Father. God is not selfish, begrudging, or stingy, and we don't have to beg or grovel as we come with our requests. He is a loving Father who understands, cares, and comforts. If humans can be kind, imagine how kind God, the Creator of kindness, can be. Jesus used the expression “If you, then, though you are evil” to contrast sinful and fallible human beings with the holy and perfect God.

The Golden Rule – Verse 12

12 So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

7:12 This is commonly known as the Golden Rule. In many religions it is stated negatively: “Don't do to others what you don't want done to you.” By stating it positively, Jesus made it more significant. It is not very hard to refrain from harming others; it is much more difficult to take the initiative in doing something good for them. The Golden Rule as Jesus formulated it is the foundation of active goodness and mercy—the kind of love God shows to us every day. Think of a good and merciful action you can do today.

The Narrow And Wide Gates – Verses 13-14

13 “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. 14 But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

7:13-14 The gate that leads to eternal life (John 10:7-9) is called “narrow.” This does not mean that it is difficult to become a Christian but that there is only one way to eternal life with God and that only a few decide to walk that road. Believing in Jesus is the only way to heaven, because he alone died for our sins and made us right before God. Living his way may not be popular, but it is true and right. Thank God there is one way!

True And False Prophets – Verses 15-20

¹⁵ “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. ¹⁶ By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

7:15 False prophets were common in Old Testament times. They prophesied only what the king and the people wanted to hear, claiming it was God’s message. Jesus indicates that false prophets were just as prevalent in his time. False teachers are just as common today. Jesus says to beware of those whose words sound religious but who are motivated by money, fame, or power. You can tell who they are because in their teaching they minimize Christ and glorify themselves.

7:20 We should evaluate teachers’ words by examining their lives. Just as trees are consistent in the kind of fruit they produce, good teachers consistently exhibit good behavior and high moral character as they seek to live out the truths of Scripture. This does not mean we should have witch hunts, throwing out Sunday school teachers, pastors, and others who are less than perfect. Every one of us is subject to sin, and we must show the same mercy to others that we expect for ourselves. When Jesus talks about worthless trees, he means teachers who deliberately teach false doctrine. We must examine the teachers’ motives, the direction they are taking, and the results they are seeking.

True and False Disciples – Verses 21-23

²¹ “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’ “That day” is the final day of reckoning when God will settle all accounts, judging sin and rewarding faith.

7:21 Some self-professed athletes can “talk” a great game, but that tells you nothing about their athletic skills. And not everyone who talks about heaven belongs to God’s kingdom. Jesus is more concerned about our walk than our talk. He wants us to do right, not just say the right words. What you do cannot be separated from what you believe.

7:21-23 Jesus exposed those people who sounded religious but had no personal relationship with him. On “that day” (the day of judgment) only our relationship with Christ—our acceptance of him as Savior and our obedience to him—will matter. Many people think that if they are “good” people and say religious things, they will be rewarded with eternal life. In reality, faith in Christ is what will count at the judgment.

The Wise and Foolish Builders – Verses 24-27

²⁴ “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ²⁶ But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice

is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

7:24 To build “on the rock” means to be a hearing, responding disciple, not a phony, superficial one. Practicing obedience becomes the solid foundation to weather the storms of life. See James 1:22-27 for more on putting into practice what we hear.

7:24-27 The two lives Jesus compares at the end of the Sermon on the Mount have several points in common: they both build, they both hear Jesus’ teaching, and they both experience the same set of circumstances in life. The difference between them isn’t caused by ignorance but by one ignoring what Jesus said. Externally, their lives may look similar; but the lasting, structural differences will be revealed by the storms of life. The immediate differences in your life when you follow Jesus may not be obvious, but eventually they will turn out to affect even your eternal destiny. To what degree does your life reflect the directions Jesus gave in this sermon?

7:26-27 Like a house of cards, the fool’s life crumbles. Most people do not deliberately seek to build on a false or inferior foundation; instead, they just don’t think about their life’s purpose. Many people are headed for destruction, not out of stubbornness but out of thoughtlessness. Part of our responsibility as believers is to help others stop and think about where their lives are headed and to point out the consequences of ignoring Christ’s message.

The Effect Of Jesus’ Sermon On Those Who Heard Him – Verses 28-29

²⁸ When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, ²⁹ because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

7:28 For He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes: His audience could not but notice that Jesus taught with an authority lacking in the other teachers in His day, who often only quoted other rabbis. Jesus spoke with inherent authority, and the authority of God’s revealed Word.

7:28-29 The people were astonished at His teachings: Whenever God’s Word is presented as it truly is, with its inherent power, it will astonish people and set itself apart from the mere opinions of man. To have the hearers astonished was a good thing; but it was not good if that was the extent of the effect. A good preacher always wants to do far more than astonish his listeners.