

Matthew 7:1-12 Pride, Pearls and Pigs

The Sermon on the Mount

By Ricky Jones

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: Matthew 7:1-12

Preached on: Sunday, May 16, 2010

Redeemer Presbyterian Church, Tulsa

10616 E 100th St

Tulsa, OK 74133

Website: www.redeemertulsa.org

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/redeemertulsa

Matthew chapter seven verses one through 12.

Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.¹

The Word of God.

Each of my children is special, every one of them. They are all special. They are better than yours. And it is not bragging. It is just an honest sermonic illustration that they all have very natural gifts. They just kind of came into the world differently. Some are... one is a natural leader. One is a natural friend maker. One is a natural builder. One actually has amazing pitch and is a natural singer. And one of my children, Will actually, is a natural with a baseball bat. He just is. He really is. He came into the world knowing what to do with a bat. And I didn't teach him how to hit. Teaching him how to

¹ Matthew 7:1-12.

hit actually was a game of daddy in the shooting gallery is what it kind of came up to. I would throw the balls up and then duck and he would crack them right back at me, a practice he has kept up last week as a matter of fact. And he knows what to do with a bat. That comes in very handy. That is very useful.

Last Tuesday night... This is not bragging. This is sermonic illustration. Last Tuesday night when our team was down by two runs in the last inning at our last at bat with one out Will hit a two run homerun because it needed to be done and that was just what needed to happen at that moment.

So he is a natural with a bat. He knows what to do with a baseball bat and that is a real blessing at times.

It is also a curse at times especially when Will was a toddler because, you see, whatever Will had in his hand he thought was a baseball bat.

Now, for his third birthday his aunt gave him an air hog plastic airplane that was very cool and it would... you would wind it up and you would throw it and it would fly until it ran into something. And despite the fact that it was very light, it was amazingly durable. It spent two weeks on top of an airport building. Had to go find a bigger, you know, [?] had to go find a bigger field. It spent two months in the top of an oak tree at the end of a vineyard I threw it down. It was just very durable, a very cool toy. It could survive all kinds of damage, but it couldn't survive Will.

Will thought it was a bat one day and I went outside, I heard something banging on the ground and there was Will using his airplane like a bat and it was over.

Whatever he held in his hand was a bat. And when he held a bat, whatever was in front of him was a ball. I have dents on my minivan to prove that.

Six years later I hear this loud noise in the garage. I go out to the garage and there is my son going, wham, wham, wham.

That is not a ball, son.

He has a gift with a bat and sometimes it comes in handy and sometimes it is destructive.

God has given you a precious gift. He has given you a gift of discernment. That gift when used wisely will protect you. It is absolutely treacherous, life threatening to go through life not using your gift of discernment. That gift when used wisely will lead you to salvation if you are able to discern where life truly can be found. But that gift when used indiscriminately will destroy you with bitterness and cynicism and it will destroy everybody you are around as you judge them, as you point out everything that is wrong about them.

God has given you the ability to discern. And Jesus tells you you have to use it to find life. Don't use it to bring death.

You have to remember who the true judge of all the earth is. And when you turn that discerning power on yourself instead of on everybody else, you discern how much you need grace. Then you are able to discern where to find grace. And you are able to discern your precious value to Christ, Christ's precious value to you. And you are even able to serve and love others if you turn that gift on yourself first.

Jesus starts here with the, I guess, maybe the most quoted verse in the Bible. "Don't judge, let you be judged."

You will be held to the standard that you hold everybody else to. And that is just kind of a life parable. We know that. If you go through life judging everybody else, everybody else is going to judge you. If you go through life being a perfectionist, a critic of everyone else, everyone else is going to critique you. And he talks about that and then he turns it on ourselves and he says, "Turn that microscope that God has given you onto yourself. Take the log out of your own eye. Take the log out of your own eye."

What is wrong with you? Answer that question first.

Judging people sure is fun, isn't it? I love it. I love it. I really do. I love to sit out in public places and just nail people as they go by, you know. I can tell you someone's whole life story by how they walk and what they wear and it is fun.

I was at a baseball game the other day. All my illustrations are coming from baseball. Can you tell where I spend every night?

I was at a baseball game the other night watching Isaac play. And this coach for the other team is this huge guy. He was loud and he was a bad man. He was obnoxious. He intimidated the umpires. It is first grade T-ball and he blew it out of proportion.

And I just decided that I was going to do a service to him and to the entire community. I was just going to... somebody had to stand up to this guy. It might as well be me. And so instead of just kind of judging him to myself I just went up to him after the game and I said, "You intimidated the umpires. You humiliated the umpires. You owe them an apology and you really need to get some perspective on baseball."

And honestly he just wasn't as smart as I am and he tried to come up with all of his excuses and I shot him down. I mean, I shot... they were so predictable, you know? Well, you know, we just need to get better umpires.

No, we don't. It is first grade T-ball, man.

Then he pulled the old, I mean, you know, the old if you really knew me... you know, if you really knew me you would think I was a good guy.

Buddy, that is the problem. You are not a good guy. You have got perspective issues.

But then he, you know, went to the last trick in the book. Please don't pull this one. He went to the hypocrite argument, you know? Well, your kid acted just as bad.

Well, I am not talking to them right now, am I?

And I just shot him down. Told him he needed to go and apologize.

He asked me, you know, who was I to say something?

I said, "I am a minister of Jesus Christ."

He really does have perspective issues. He really does. He needs to change.

But who is worse in that story? Who is worse? Let's just take it apart. It is easy. I set myself up as an easy target, but I want you to think about it with me for a second. Here we have a guy who is turning baseball into a savior. Why would he do that? You are talking to a guy who is divorced. Probably his only connection with his son is baseball. Baseball is his son's Messiah. It is what is going to pay for his son's college he is absolutely sure. It is what is going to keep his son off of drugs. Baseball really is his Jesus because he doesn't know the true Jesus.

And then you have me, a minister of the gospel who reportedly believes that God loved him so much that he gave his only begotten Son to be with me, who reportedly believes that while there was nothing in him that was righteous, while he was still a sinner, God loved him and gave his Son to die for him. And here he is looking at this sinner who is going to hell and thinking to himself, "Let me open the door."

Who is worse? Who has got the real deep issues in his life that he needs to deal with there? Who has got the amazing contradiction that is absolutely obvious to everybody else but himself? Who is worse in that story?

Jesus says, "You idiot, take the log out of your eye."

What is the log that is in your eye? You think you are God. That is kind of obvious to everybody else that you are not. And even God said he did not send his Son into the world to judge the world. So you think God sent you in there to do the job for him. All of the sudden it is your job to go into the world and tell everybody what they are doing wrong.

Really?

Really? Is that why I was there that night? Really?

Take the log out of your own eye.

On the surface I was testy that night. I was a little short tempered, probably a hormonal issue. I blame it on something. But underneath I hated that man. Underneath he was ruining something that was supposed to be a good memory for me and I hated him. Underneath I despised the gospel that night because I didn't want sinners to be saved. I wanted sinners to be condemned. And I denied the truth of the gospel.

What is the log we have to remove from our eyes? It is that we think we are sinless and we live our life as if we received no grace. And so we give grace to no one else. And we do it well.

And Jesus tells us, "Turn that high powered microscope on yourself."

You carefully examine everybody else's motives and actions, but you are so well familiarized with your own excuses you give yourself a break. Why don't you judge yourself the way you judge everyone else? Why don't you carefully, honestly, ask yourself why you commit the sins that you commit?

Jesus comes to us and says, "Ladies, I know your husband deserved that tongue lashing."

You were 90 percent right. He really did need it. But I did command you to respond to your husband the way Church responds to Jesus. Would you talk to Jesus that way? Were you really trying to help him on to Jesus or were you mad at him for not being the husband that you dreamed of and think that you deserve? Why are you so mad or are you resenting him for not being your ideal. Is it fair for you to get angry about him not being at home when you turn the environment of your home into a hostile environment that no one would want to come in.

Turn that microscope on yourself.

He looks at you husbands who, you know, I know you are far to gracious to criticize your wife vocally. And you wanted to get to church on time because that is what righteous people do, but you wouldn't say a word about it. You would just tap your watch and tap your foot and jiggle your keys and send out silent messages that are wilting the plants and causing dogs to go cowering.

And the question is: Is that the way Jesus treated you? Is the only thing Jesus had to forgive you for being late? Really?

How was Mother's Day for you? Was it a burden to be nice to your mom? Well, it should have been a burden, right? I mean, your mom is a manipulator. She just is trying

to use you to fill her idols and to get, you know, her self respect out of how much you love her, right?

Yeah.

Well, maybe we should turn that microscope on ourselves and say, “Well, my does my mom have to manipulate me to get my attention?”

My mom? It is a pain to give my mom attention one day a year? Really?

How do we use our critical tongue? Do we use our tongue against our church? Well, I mean, yeah there is a lot wrong with it. I know more about what is wrong with this church than you do.

Do you use your tongue against the popular people in school? I mean they are bad folks, right? And that is the reason they are popular because they are so bad and we criticize them to make ourselves feel better, don't we?

We all... Jesus tells all of us to turn that high powered critical microscope on ourselves and to remember that we are not to judge. We stand in front of the true judge of the universe. We stand in front of the true judge who sees our sins much more clearly than we see the sins of the people around us. And he tells us that if we are a hypocritical judge because we have received no grace. If we give no grace, it is because we have received no grace.

Take the log out of your own eye first.

But he doesn't stop there.

You know, I think, Jesus goes on to give us a very interesting warning and I want you to look at it carefully with me. Get your reading glasses back out and look at verse six. It is an interesting verse, really. It seems to make no sense.

I love verses that seem to make no sense.

“Do not give dogs what is holy.”²

Why don't we give the dogs the Word of God? They eat it.

“Do not throw your pearls before pigs.”³

Why not? Because they can't eat those and they get mad at you if you try. And what do they do if they get mad at you?

² Matthew 7:6.

³ Ibid.

“They trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.”⁴

Now at first glance this is just a helpful warning. And it is an important warning. I am going to take five seconds to tell it to you.

There are people in the world who are bad people. You need to know this.

To take the log out of your own eye it means that when you come into a relationship with someone you do it in a vulnerable way. You do it knowing that you are a sinner. You do it in a way that makes you vulnerable. You come to people with apologies. You come to people with grace, with the understanding that you are a sinner. But you have to understand that there are some people in the world who will turn and take that apology and attack you with it. And there are people you have to protect yourself against. That is not a whole class of people. It doesn't mean there are people out there who don't deserve the gospel. It just means there are bad people out there, people who do not think they are sinners. There are even people out there who will use the gospel of Jesus Christ against you. They exist. They do. And you need to be prepared for them and you need to protect yourself from them. You need to use your discernment there.

But that is not all that Jesus is saying. I think that he is saying more because he uses this to transition to this beautiful text about God being our Father. And so I want us to think about what... how does that get us to this promise of being God's children? What is Jesus getting at?

And I think what he want from us is he wants for us to ask the question: Are you a pig? He wants me to ask myself that question. Am I in danger of becoming a pig? Am I in danger of becoming so cynical, so critical that when I see anybody out there I am able to shoot them down. I know what they do wrong. I don't have to believe what anybody else believes. I am smarter than all of them.

Am I in danger of being so critical that no one can get close to me? Am I so convinced that I am right all the time that everyone around me is wrong? We live in a real danger of becoming that cynical.

And he prescribes this cure for us and I think it is in this interesting little saying, “Don't throw pearls before swine. Don't give dogs what is holy.”

Why not? Because the swine doesn't want pearls. A swine want food. That is all he wants. He only want what is useful to him. He doesn't want something that is beautiful in and of itself.

And Jesus goes on in Matthew to describe himself as the pearl, the pearl without price. And he invites us to make the pearl our own. And I think he is asking us: Do we look upon him, do we look upon the gospel, do we look upon that which is holy and just see something that is either useful or not useful? Or do we see something beautiful?

⁴ Ibid.

Do we love it just for what it is? Is it beautiful to us or is he only useful to us? What is it that will cure you of your cynical, critical spirit?

It is seeing Jesus as beautiful, seeing him as the beautiful.

Now the problem with beauty is that it serves no other purpose. It is not pragmatic. It is not useful, right?

Lord willing, we are going to build a building one day and there is going to be two groups of people, those who want us to worship in a box and those who want us to worship in something beautiful. And the people who want us to worship in a box are going to say, "What is the use of beauty?"

And those of us who believe in the importance of beauty are going to sneer and look down upon those people.

Beauty has no pragmatic value. It is valuable in and of itself.

Tim Keller uses the illustration this way. He says when he went to college he took music appreciation and in music appreciation he had to listen to Mozart. So he listened to Mozart. Why did he listen to Mozart? Because he wanted a good grade. Why did he want a good grade? Because he wanted a high GPA. Why did he want a high GPA? So he could get a good job. Why did he want to get a good job? So he could make a lot of money. So he listened to Mozart to make money.

He says now he has found beauty in his life. Now he spends money to listen to Mozart. It is the value of beauty. When you see Jesus do you see something that is valuable to get you something else? Do you see Jesus as a tool to get you a better job, as a tool to get you a better family, as a tool to get you to a better place in life? Or is he valuable in and of himself?

You will never see him as valuable in and of himself until you understand that his love for you is different than your love for anything else and you cannot find it any other place.

Think about the things that you love. What do I love? I love turnip greens when they are cooked right. I love the beach. I love my wife. I love cheesecake and a good nap on a rainy day.

But why do I love those things? Because there is something in there of value to me. There is something in each of those things that makes me feel good, especially turnips. There is something in there that makes me enjoy them. They have an intrinsic value to me.

Now think about God's love for you. Why does God love you? Does God love you because you are here, because you read the Bible, because you love him, because you give your money to the poor, because you are involved with good causes, because you say no to sin? If you believe those things you will live your life in a critical spirit toward those who aren't those things, angry at God because he is not blessing you for those things enough and ultimately afraid that you are not good enough.

The Bible says while you were still dead in your trespasses and sin God made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved.

He loved you when there was nothing about you worth loving. And his love has awakened you and made you alive.

So, as Saint Augustine says, "His love has made us lovable." And he broods over us with that love. And he takes care of us with that love and he is gracious to us with that love and he overwhelms us with that love and he changes us with that love.

And whatever it is that we are looking for from the world, we can only find in the love that God has lavished upon us. And when we understand that, when we understand that the thing that we think we want from the world is all found there in that pearl, then we stop spitting out the pearls and feasting on the slop and we give everything else up just to look on the pearl. And that is all we need. That is all we need. We don't need anything greater or better or bigger than that.

There is this odd text in the Old Testament. I love it. I can't get over it these last couple of weeks. It is in Joshua. I think it is in chapter six. But Joshua is about to go and attack Jericho and so he is nervous, you know, he is on the plains of Jericho. The man is not coming anymore. Now is the time that he has been training for and he is out walking around scared to death and he sees a strange soldier with a sword drawn in his hand and he looks at him and he says, "So are you for us or against us?"

And the man just says, "No." He says, "I am the commander of the armies of the Lord. I am the commander of the armies of Yahweh."

And so Joshua worships. You think he gets it, right? But he doesn't.

And he stands up and he says, "So what do you want me to do? What word does the Lord have for me?"

And the Lord looks at him and says, "I want you to take your shoes off. You are only holy ground. You have me. Did you not hear me? I am here. What can you do for me? Come on. I am here. I am here. Let me be enough. Recognize where you are. Recognize who you have."

I think Jesus looks at us and he says, "Stop looking for slop. Stop getting mad at all these people who come in between you and your slop. You have me. You have the pearl.

Quit worrying about all that other stuff. Receive me. Recognize what I do for you. Recognize who your daddy is.”

Look at verse seven.

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!⁵

He says, “First turn that microscope on yourself and see who you really are. Then turn your microscope on me and see who the pearl is. Now turn your microscope on God and see who you are.”

You are his child. If you don’t have something, ask. If you don’t have a desire for that pearl ask. If you have no appreciate for the beauty of Christ, ask. If you don’t have Christ, if you realize there is something missing seek. If there is something in your life you don’t have that you feel like you need, ask. Don’t confuse self pity with prayer. Wandering around wishing you had something is not the same as asking. Ask. Ask not like a beggar. Ask like a child. He loves you. He is going to give you what you need.

And then interpret your life through the lens of his love. Interpret your life through the lens of his love. He is your Father.

According to this text, I am evil. My children would attest to that.

“If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children...”⁶

Human fathers are evil compared to how much God loves us. Human mothers are forgetful.

Isaiah 49 says, “Can a mother forget the child who is nursing at her breast? I tell you she may forget, but I cannot forget you.”

And as evil as I am, if my children ask me for a rattlesnake, I would not give it to them. And there are things that you are so mad at God because he has not given them to you. And it could very well be because you are asking for a rattlesnake and you do not know it.

⁵ Matthew 7:7-11.

⁶ Matthew 7:11.

If he is not giving something to you, it is not because you are not good enough. He gave you his Son when you hated him. If he is withholding something from you, it is because you do not need it.

I don't know why he is doing what he is doing, but I know that much. I know you can trust him.

Some of you hate God for giving you the personality that you have. You think if God really liked you, he would have made you more like someone else, more like me.

God gave you exactly the personality he wants you to have. He has given you exactly the job he wants you to have. He has given you exactly the husband he wants you to have. He has given you exactly the wife he wants you to have. He has given you exactly the children, exactly the job, exactly the life. And you can trust him. And you can sleep, ask for the grace to love your job and love your life and love your spouse and love your children and love your personality and love your parents.

And when you get to heaven you can ask him why and he will explain it to you. And he loves you.

You can trust him.

And now that you realize you can trust God to provide everything you need, you can stop focusing on what you think you need. You can stop focusing on the stuff that you need and that allows you to stop seeing people as an obstacle and start seeing them as people that you can love.

You understand, I don't have to have a great experience everything I go to the baseball field. I don't because I have got Jesus. So I don't have to see this loud mouth coach as an obstacle to my son having a good life. I can see him as somebody who needs Jesus and I can help him rather than hate him.

You don't have to have fast service when you go to the restaurant today. You don't have to. You are not nearly as busy as you think you are. And you don't have to see your slow waiter as an obstacle to something you have to have. You can see him as someone who needs to be loved, who was put there by your Father in heaven. And now you can move toward people with love and with grace instead of trying to force them to be what you want them to be.

Look what Jesus tells you to do. He tells you to use your gift of discernment on people in a gracious way. He says, "You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye."⁷

I don't know if you ever had anything taken out of your eye. This is an extremely humbling experience. When I used to... when I was growing up my cousin was like eight

⁷ Matthew 7:5.

times faster than I was. Every time we raced he would just kill me. And Fourth of July the parents are getting... we always spent the Fourth of July together. Our parents were just getting ready to leave which means they are talking in a new place and we were kind of bothering them and so one of them looks up and says, "Go run around that tree. Race around the tree."

So we take off. It is almost dark. This is one of my most vivid memories. And he runs a big circle around the tree because he can, because he is way out in front of me. And I think my only chance is to get as close to that tree as I can. So I ran up under it and I caught a low lying limb right there. And I cried and cried and cried and went home, went to bed. And then about 10 minutes after I went to bed I started crying a whole new way.

My mom had come in. I remember this, the most vivid memory of my childhood, I think. Just so tender, holding my eye open, telling me to look around until this little piece of wood popped out. And it was just an absolute vulnerability. And she was so gentle.

Can you come to somebody with that kind of gentleness? Can you come to someone and move toward them? Do you have the kind of humility that encourages that kind of vulnerability? Does someone know they can come to you in absolute helplessness and you are going to listen and help? Do you display the kind of gentleness that elicits someone to ask you for help? Are you patient enough to listen through the problem and not just kind of find something immediate you can address and move on? Are you gentle enough that when you speak to a particular sin the person actually knows that you speak out of love and not out of criticism?

If so, then move toward people. And if not, ask and you will receive. Seek patience and you will get it. Ask the Lord for gentleness and he will give it.

He asks us to restore people gently and he asks us to learn how to love people

Verse 12 ends this passage.

"So..."

It means everything before it rests upon it.

"So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets."⁸

The golden rule demand discernment, doesn't it? You have to turn that microscope on people and figure out how to love them.

I don't know about you. I wasn't married long before I realized the golden rule didn't work. All right, just love people the way you want to be loved. Well, the way I want to

⁸ Matthew 7:12.

be loved is I want to be left alone. Right up until bed time and then I want to be lavished with love.

So I ignored my wife until bedtime. That is what I wanted, right?

It didn't work.

And you soon realize that the golden rule goes a little deeper than that. It means you have to actually discern how people interpret love.

What do I want? I want someone to get to know me well enough to know what I want. I want someone to get to know me well enough to know how I interpret their actions and whether I am going to see this as loving or not. That is what other people want, too.

Discern how to love other people.

Jesus requires that we think about others, that we put ourselves in their place and we communicate love to them in a way that gets through properly. But that can only happen if you are not manipulating people to give you something that you want. And the only way you will ever stop manipulating people is if you already have everything you need. And the only way you are ever going to have everything you need is to stop pushing that pearl out of the way and receive it. Receive the Lord's grace. He is giving you everything you need.

Please pray with me.