

Sermon on the Mount: Censoriousness Forbidden

by J. Glyn Owen

Jesus teaches that we should not judge hypocritically, looking for faults in others while ignoring our own, but rather apply the standard of judgment to ourselves first and then to others with mercy and compassion.

Duration: 48:07

Scripture: Matthew 5:48, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 7:1-8, Matthew 7:12

Topics: "Sermon on the Mount"

Description

The sermon transcript is about the continuation of a series on the Sermon on the Mount, specifically focusing on Matthew chapter 7. The passage emphasizes the importance of not judging others, as we will be judged in the same way. It also highlights the hypocrisy of pointing out others' faults while ignoring our own. The passage concludes with a warning not to give what is sacred to those who will not appreciate it. Overall, the sermon emphasizes the need for self-reflection and humility in our relationships with others.

Transcript

Earlier on in the year, we began a series on the Sermon on the Mount and when the summer season came upon us, the series fell into abeyance. This morning we would like to take up the thread once again and we shall from now on continue with Matthew chapter 7, leading to the conclusion of this remarkable Sermon on the Mount inside, uttered by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We turn this morning to the first passage in this remarkable chapter, verses 1 to 6 in Matthew 7, and I would like to read these words now.

If you have your New Testaments handy before you, I'm sure you'll find it helpful. Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

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? 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? 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. Do not give dogs what is sacred. Do not throw your pearls to pigs.

If you do, they may trample them under feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces. Sensoriousness forbidden is the title we have given to these words of our Lord, and I trust that is accurate to what our Lord had on His mind and on His heart when He first uttered these words. Now, whereas chapter 6 has been concerned particularly with the relation of the Christian to his God, and the promotion of that perfection referred to by our Lord in verse 48, when He said that we are to be perfect even as our Heavenly Father is perfect, this first section of chapter 7 forcefully fixes our gaze upon our relation to others, other people, though we shall also find some things in this chapter that will turn our gaze again back directly to our Heavenly Father.

The point is, of course, in the ongoing movement of this great sermon, the things mentioned in chapter 6 need to be supplemented by the things that are brought out in chapter 7. And we are dealing with only one thing at a time. We tend to forget the wholeness of things. Giving to the needy, praying, fasting, laying up treasure in heaven, and then learning not to worry because of God's unique relation to His people.

Things we discussed, things we expounded in chapter 6, all those are absolutely indispensable. But so also is this matter before us today. To use the words of one commentator, one moat hunter, quoting the translation of the King James about seeking to cast out the mote in your brother's eye, one moat hunter in a congregation can divide the people of God and decimate them.

One censorious individual among the fellowship of the saints can scatter the Lord's people and bring disaster in the train of his loose thinking and his loose speaking. So in this passage we have our Lord forbidding something which is quite important. He is forbidding us not so much to judge where judgment is necessary, but to walk among the people of God or out in the outside world as if judgment were committed to us.

As if it were a gift given to us alone and our judgment is infallible and we feel that we have a right to judge everybody and tell everybody where to get off and what to do and what not to do. Ultimately judgment belongs to God alone. In so far as it is necessary for us to discriminate between one thing and another, and it is as we shall see in a moment, we must do so in the spirit of God and according to the word of God.

But this is the most delicate thing committed to Christian people to do. It is to have to distinguish between truth and error, right and wrong in the lives of other people as well as in our own. And it must be handled with due care, with compassion and sensitivity, lest in so doing we dishonor our Lord rather than honor him.

Now in the first place I want you to notice therefore a vital distinction which emerges here right at the beginning of this passage and it needs to be made very clear. When Jesus is here forbidding us to quote not to judge, he is not and cannot be thereby telling us to hold our faculty of judgment in abeyance completely. We have to distinguish between black and white, between right and wrong, between truth and error.

The whole of the Bible, the whole of the New Testament is based upon that. When you became a Christian you had to choose one thing from another. You had to choose truth from error, God's word against the words of men.

The Lord Jesus Christ rather than other objects of faith or lords over your life. You had to choose, you had to make a choice, you had to judge in that sense. Now Jesus cannot be meaning that we should forego that kind of discrimination and distinction, process of distinguishing.

Otherwise he would be undermining the whole teaching of the Old Testament and of the New. We have to distinguish between one thing and another. What then is he saying? Well we shall come to that but in a moment let's get this very clear.

Judgment and discrimination are absolutely essential and you, all of you and I included, we've all had to be distinguishing things during the week that has gone. We distinguish between people whom we're going to befriend and those that we're not. People who are worthy of our confidence and those whom we may not be quite sure of.

Something was suggested to us and we thought well now the standard is not quite right and we distinguish. We say no, no I can't do that but I will do this. This is altogether necessary.

We are summoned to live a moral life, a Christian life, a God honoring life and in all of this we have to discern between the one thing and the other. Truth must be distinguished from falsehood, right from wrong, good from evil, right. The next thing I want you to notice is this that Jesus practiced that and his disciples practiced that principle and after our Lord Jesus was ascended and the church began to grow in the book of the Acts of the Apostles the same thing was necessary.

There had to be this kind of distinction, distinguishing between one thing and another. I say it and I have to dwell upon it for a moment because you might think that Jesus is saying well don't judge one another in any way at all. Just go on let everybody do right or wrong, good or evil and we do not try to teach each other and help each other towards truth and righteousness and godliness and sanctity.

Jesus expected his own disciples to distinguish as they engaged in their ministry. Now if you've read the Gospels recently and if you've got a good memory I don't need to repeat anything to you but let me just give you one or two illustrations very quickly. When our Lord sent his disciples to preach into the villages for example he told them something like this whatever town or village you enter search for some worthy person and stay at his home until you leave.

As you enter the home give it your greeting. If the home is deserving you notice they have to judge. If the home is deserving let your peace rest upon it.

If it is not you see they've got to discriminate. Let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words now here it is again shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or that town I tell you the truth it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for you.

So we've got to distinguish one thing from the other. The same thing again with reference to the Pharisees Jesus said every plant that my heavenly father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots but don't you touch them he tells the disciples you leave them they are blind leaders of the blind. The same principle there are some people we are not to listen to they may be they may be commissioned by the church to proclaim what should be the word of God as the Pharisees were and the scribes were by the church of the Jews in New Testament times if we may so speak.

But they were not doing so honorably and correctly and our Lord says they're blind leaders of the blind you've got to forget about them and just go on follow my words follow my teaching. So Jesus expected his disciples to distinguish and to discriminate as they went about their business again the Apostles had regularly to do the same in their ongoing ministry this side of Pentecost Peter on the day of Pentecost had

to distinguish between those who were believers and those who were not and on that great Pentecostal sermon you remember at the heart of it he says this save yourselves from this corrupt generation. There is distinguishing again there is judging again this generation says Peter is corrupt and you've got to get away from the corrupt generation separate yourselves from the corrupt and the corruption and you've got to repent of your sins and turn to Jesus Messiah that your sins may be blotted out and that you may receive the gift of the Holy Spirit you have to do that they distinguished you see.

Now you go on into the book of the Acts you will see that they likewise had to distinguish between true believers and false believers.

Let me give you one classical illustration there is the case of Simon the sorcerer in Samaria we read in Acts chapter 8 and verse 13 that Simon believed and was baptized and he followed Philip everywhere astonished by the great signs and the miracles that were done and everybody thought this sorcerer as he is called he has become a Christian but Peter when he arrived on the scene addressed this same man and he had to say this to him you have no part nor share in this ministry because your heart is not right before God repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord you see the Apostles had to judge and you may go on and you see not only do they have to distinguish between true believers and false believers but they had to discern and distinguish between babes in Christ and mature

Christians and Paul was writing to the Corinthians one Corinthians chapter three he said this to them rather pathetically he said brothers I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly mere infants in Christ I give you milk not solid food for you were not yet ready for it now just imagine it here is the Apostle of the Lord here is the mouthpiece of the Almighty God and he's writing to Corinth and he's telling them look he says I want you to know that I can't talk to you as mature believers I've got to cut up everything I have to say into little bits and pieces more than that I can't give you I can't give you meat I can't give you anything to chew I just got to give you milk like a baby or like to what a mother gives a baby and you know there are many congregations of Christians in

that in that situation still they can only take a few drops of milk and in in little drops few drops they can't take the deep things of God they would go quite mad either at the preacher or at the truth you have the same thing in the epistle to the Hebrews we have much to say says the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews concerning the high priesthood of our Lord but it is hard to explain because you were slow to hear or to sorry to learn in fact though by this time you ought to be teachers you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's Word all over again you need milk not solid food anyone who lives on milk is still an infant what a condemnation of a people who profess the Christian faith for many years and they can still only take a little drop of milk now and again their

digestive system is such they cannot take the meat of God's revealed word and you see the apostles had to distinguish it's very interesting that John Calvin in interpreting that that passage about rightly dividing the word of truth tells us that what it really means is this it's the father at the head of the table the family meet for meals and he looks at them and some of them have been working up assuming there's a large family of course some of them have been out plowing in the field and perhaps they come in and they're very hungry and that man needs a good chunk on his plate somebody else has got a very weak appetite he doesn't need so much and there's a babe there well he'll have no meat at all he'll have milk brothers and sisters we've got to distinguish there is no such a thing as a

Christianity which does not pass judgment whatever it is it is not the Christianity of the New Testament I would have to not time to come to come to go any further but just to mention this the same goes with relation to false prophets but of course the clinching thing here is this if Jesus were meaning that we must never judge anything or anyone then he's going to contradict himself in the sixth verse of this same paragraph because there Jesus is calling certain people dogs and hogs dogs and pigs I'm not using that the Son of God did and he's passing judgment and he is exercising this this discrimination of one from another between one and another so then we've got to take note of that vital distinction now that brings me to the second thing what is the forthright prohibition that we have

here well now I would plead this morning for one thing which is not as obvious in the New International Version as in most of the other versions I would plead for one thing and I have no time to dwell upon it but only to ask for it that we should look upon these first six verses as one paragraph undivided I had come to the conclusion that the New International Version the translators of the New International Version must have had a reason for splitting it up into three little paragraphs I thought there must be some textual reason for that well I can find none none whatsoever it's only a linguistic matter or they like to split things up into small paragraphs that's the best way they think to get the message across well now I'm not quarreling with them but what I am saying is this in order

to see the full significance of what Jesus is saying you've got to take the whole paragraph one to six very closely together and if you just take the opening words on their own then you're going to make nonsense out of them do not judge are the first words if you're going to put a period there and forget that the whole thing is linked very intimately with what follows you're going to land up in a position that you're going to make our Lord contradict himself and that he never would do what then is our Lord saying here I can only summarize it first of all he is saying something like this when it is necessary for us to judge between one thing and another good and bad truth or error we must do so according to a standard which we apply to ourselves before we apply it to others in other words

this is not just a theoretical matter or this is not something that that I do merely merely in relation to other people it must be a conviction it must represent my acceptance of the truth in question or of the right portrayed by God's Word and I must be applying the principle or the standards to myself that I am applying to other people do not judge or you too will be judged for in the same sense in the same way you judge others you will be judged and with the measures you use it will be measured to you again God will judge you ultimately he says by the standard you employ to judge other people therefore the sooner the better you accept that standard before you start judging other people see that you use the same measuring rod for yourself this is very important for a Christian community

because it's so easy to judge other people with a measuring rod that we don't use on ourselves but the concern of our Lord you see was really to prohibit a kind of sensorious attitude which goes around looking for other people's faults bringing them out into the open whether they're imaginary or real and spreading rumors did you hear about so-and-so what do you think about this and suddenly we are sitting in judgment upon other people sometimes utterly baseless without any basis for what we suggest or what we say or what we imply you see the scribes and the Pharisees tried to do this kind of thing with Jesus they spread rumors and they were not true rumors for example that that he was disloyal to Moses or that he was disloyal to Abraham or that he was disloyal to Caesar and so forth and

they would have pursued those things those charges but our Lord was able to show that the thing was quite baseless the charges were baseless in each case and in every other case lurking behind the words

of Jesus is a highly important principle if I have time this morning I would like to refer back to Romans chapter 2 and the first verse few verses there you can do that at your leisure you you you wonder how heathen people how how people who've never heard the gospel are going to be judged at last Paul has something to say about it but what I want to say and that is related to it what I want to say is this if we know a standard of behavior to be God's standard and we only apply it to other people then we are very perverse to say the least and we are not acting for the well-being of the

church nor for the glory of God first of all we must apply the truth to ourselves and then maybe we shall have the humility and sometimes the courage that is needed and the right spirit to apply it to people at large because you see ultimately judgment doesn't belong to you or to me judgment doesn't belong even even to a church or a session of a church judgment is the prerogative of God Almighty and he has committed all judgment to the Son and in so far as it is necessary for us to discern to distinguish between one course of action and another we've got to be very careful that we do it in the way God does it with mercy and with judgment with compassion as well as with right in righteousness now when we judge others this is the second thing we must never therefore do it hypocritically why

do you look says our Lord and this is hyperbole of the first order 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 how can you 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 you hypocrite first take the plank out of your own eye and then you will see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother's eye this is remarkable hyperbole really isn't it and it exposes the sheer impropriety and perversity of somebody doing like this let me put it in different language here is a man coming and there's a there's a 12 foot plank sticking out of the socket of his eye well now that's not possible of course but that's what Jesus is saying here a 12 foot plank eight

by six coming out of the socket of his eye everybody can see it everywhere and he can't see anything but he comes up to somebody and says hi brother you got self a foreign body in your eye let me deal with it you know it's nonsensical it can't be done if you've got a problem like that in your eye you can't see a speck in somebody else's eye to start off with and even if you can see it with your one good eye you're not in good shape to take it out I wouldn't trust my eye to you did you ever know of a blind leader of the blind well you may have but I don't think you've ever heard of a blind doctor attending to people's eyes to get rid of foreign bodies and Jesus says it's as much nonsensical as that you might be tempted to say that that man was thinking of others more than he was thinking

of himself and he was willing to help others whilst he had a great trouble in his in his eye well Jesus doesn't look at it like that that man was not really concerned about truth or error right or wrong he was out he was a moat hunter he was a fault finder he was he was he was he was looking for things and where he couldn't see them he imagined them and if he didn't like such and such a person well he would stick something on to him and say hi brother what's what's that in your life this kind of hypocrisy is found in unexpected places but less somebody thinks and I shouldn't be at all surprised that there may be somebody of this morning who says now that's really exaggeration nobody would do that I won't ask you to put your hand up if you believe that but let me give you a classical

illustration from Scripture and I think I could give you some illustrations from experience too but I will confine myself to one classical illustration from Scripture it was read for us this morning from 2 Samuel chapter 12 verses 1 to 7 you remember the story very well a man what a plank in his eye and yet he wanted to deal with a little moat and somebody else's eye and it was none other than Israel's great King

David you remember what happened David lusted after Bathsheba who didn't belong to him she was somebody else's wife I don't need to go into the details save to say that he committed adultery with her and he fathered a child to her and then so that so that her husband would not find out he worked things so that her her husband who was in military service should be killed on the

field of battle and if her husband Uriah was killed in the field of battle no one would be any the wiser all things would go well and to go on just as usual well no God had seen God saw God sent his prophet Nathan to David you know God make some wonderful choices and Nathan went to David and did you notice Nathan didn't speak to him in ordinary speech that is in plain language in prose he spoke to him in a kind of parable and he said to him you remember he said to him there was a certain wealthy farmer a very rich man he had large flocks many sheep and strange to say when somebody came and he wanted to make a meal he didn't want to take one of his own sheep out of the flock but he set his heart on getting a little ewe lamb the only one that a neighbor of his possessed and he just went on

with it says Nathan to David and he got this one little ewe lamb that meant so much to this other neighbor and David got hotter and hotter and more angry and more angry and he said ultimately who is that man he'll have to pay back fourfold and Nathan said David you are the man see the point he condemned in others in the parable he saw it was wrong and with all his soul he boiled in righteous indignation against it he was blind to his own guilt at that stage I'm not saying that he didn't know that he was guilty what I'm saying is this that he didn't recognize the heinousness of it the gravity of it was a plank in his eye you see Israel's great king was blind to that plank in his own eye whilst he boiled with fury at the thought of such a sin in someone else's eye are we ever in danger of

that Jesus would tell us what he told his disciples at a later stage in John 7 24 stop judging by mere appearances and make righteous judgment those aren't Jesus own words here then is an area of life we all need to consider very carefully our communion season is coming up brothers and sisters it is necessary for us to make sure that we are right with God and very right with one another too and if there is any such a spirit abroad not only shall we miss something but we shall be guilty of grieving the Spirit of God as he would come to us via the sacrament on the word as we meet together in his good providence that brings me to the last thing a challenging application to exercise sound judgment in verse 6 do not give dogs what is sacred do not throw your pearls to big pigs if you do says

Jesus they may trample them under their feet and then turn and tear you to pieces I see what Jesus is doing having told them not to be quick to judge others nevertheless he says it is necessary to discriminate between one thing and another this verse has shocked many people unless you are familiar with the Gospels you may have long forgotten that the one who could be gentle as a lamb could also act like a lion and there were times during his earthly ministry when Jesus was exceedingly outspoken as when he called Herod Antipas that fox when he branded some hypocritical people as whited sepulchres and again in the same context in Matthew you snakes you brood of vipers those are the words of gentle Jesus meek and mild and you can be sure they were justified before he spoke them and it was he

who spoke in this context of dogs and pigs what can this mean how are we to discern who is who and to separate the one from the other well let a contemporary commentator help us here who then are the dogs and the pigs he asks by giving them these names he replies Jesus is indicating not only that they are more animal than human but that they are animals with dirty habits as well the dogs he had in mind were not the well-behaved lap dogs of the elegant home but the wild pariah dogs vagabonds and mongrels who scavenged the city's rubbish dumps and pigs were unclean animals to the Jew not to mention their love of

mud now there in few brief words we have the explanation let's look at it just a little as we come to a conclusion dogs and pigs described some people in terms of their reaction to

the gospel dogs and that which is sacred do not cast that which is sacred to the dogs do not throw the sacred to the dogs brothers and sisters followers of Christ have been given something which is altogether sacred divine our gospel is divine it originated in the heart of God in the mind of God no one else had a word to say about it did you know that not a man not a scholar not a simpleton not anybody our gospel originated in the heart and mind of God and God alone he didn't consult with anyone and in the execution of it he put all the work of our redemption in the hand of his co-equal son the Lord Jesus Christ and his own son came and was born of the Virgin and lived a holy life and laid it down in death so that in the execution of it as well as in the origination of it it is

sacred it is divine also in the application of it how does the salvation that originated in God and was made possible by Christ his co-equal son how does it come home to me how does it come over to me by the Holy Ghost the Holy Spirit you can never work up an awareness of your lost condition without Christ you can never repent of your sin unless the Holy Spirit convicts you I can't either of course none of us can the whole of our salvation is of God God is in it it is the power of God working unto the end of salvation that's what the gospel is you see it's a sacred thing and what Jesus is saying in the proclamation of the gospel there comes a point when you cannot give the gospel to some people if you've started to give them the gospel you'll have to stop you have to distinguish because

in relation to the gospel they will treat it as a dogwood now what does this mean I believe that it's something like this it doesn't imply that we do not preach the gospel to sinners the gospel was was was originated in the heart of God to save sinners God sent forth his son to save that which was lost it doesn't mean that but what it means is this there are some unbelieving men and women and the more you offer them the gospel the more they will blaspheme and the more it will provoke the sin of their hearts and the unbelief of their souls and the anger of their spirits and you will only provoke the work of Satan in them the more you offer them the gospel there comes a time when you don't cast that which is before the dogs you see the Old Testament Jews would never give sacred food food

that had been consecrated in the temple or in the synagogue in the temple or the tabernacle they wouldn't they wouldn't give that to the dogs they wouldn't give that to a man only to the priest now says Jesus bringing up the illustration of bringing it up to death you cannot cast that which is sacred to the dogs and when you see sinners blaspheming against the gospel stop pass on go into all the world and make disciples of all nations move on Jesus there are others waiting as Jesus himself did you remember after spending a whole day in Capernaum the beginning of Mark's gospel and they wanted him to come back another day and but as he was praying and the disciples went and woke him up or alerted him from his prayers and they said everybody's seeking for you no no he says I'm not coming

back to Capernaum today let us go forth into the next villages the other towns also for thither for therefore came I have got to move on they've heard they've seen and what they've heard and seen has not brought forth faith but something else it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment and for them brothers and sisters this is an element of the gospel and we don't pay attention to and in Christian work in church planting in missionary work it is all important there comes a time there comes a time when people have been so so overwhelmed with a gospel that it only makes them more angry or harder and I believe our Lord is telling us at that point move on same as the principle in the next do not throw your pearls before swine all the language is harsh but the truth

is a terrifying one the gospel is a pearl of great price you a believer in the Lord Jesus today I want to tell you you've got the most wonderful pearl in all creation and of all time in the parable Jesus said the man who should be prepared to sell everything that he's got in order to gain this pearl of great price that's what the gospel is you don't throw that you don't throw that to hogs feed them with corn feed them with acorns feed them with it whatever their menu may be but don't feed them with pearls they don't know how to distinguish between pearls and acorns and when they put the pearls in their mouth and try to eat them and can't they will just trample them underfoot and if they get angry they may turn upon you to move on you've got to distinguish oh my good friends we're dealing

with something this morning which may sound strange and we do not often preach about it but it is something exceedingly important in the work of our Lord and we need the gracious spirit of Jesus himself to be able to discern the right from the wrong the truth from the error may he grant to you as you meet people out in the outside world this week may he grant you that spirit may he grant it to all of us may he grant it to us as a congregation may he grant it to us in whatever work we're involved in to know when we have reached saturation point in presenting the truth to people I know men and women who have sat for over 50 years under the sound of the Word of God and when you speak to them about faith in Jesus Christ they get angry I believe Jesus is telling us something nevertheless my

friends the body of men and women are not in that in that category the multitudes in the outside world this morning are waiting they're like a harvest field ready to harvest the real danger perhaps for you and for me is to forget that the vast multitudes have not heard by the grace of God let us hold these truths in balance and thus honor him who speaks so clearly in his word and who has promised us this Holy Spirit to obey him let us pray God our Father grant us your spirit we pray that we may rightly respond to your word and its message to us we thank you that in the delicate task that you have given to every believer and to your church in general and to your servants whom you have thrust forth to labor for you in your harvest field in this you have promised yourself to come with your

servants to go with them Oh Lord our God forgive us if we have sometimes acted hypocritically and have judged things wrong in others which we have justified in our own lives enable us to acknowledge such sins and to confess them before you and to forsake them straighten out the crooked in us build up the valleys in us that our lives may be a highway prepared for the coming of the glory of the Lord we ask it in Jesus name Amen

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