

John Wesley's Explanatory Notes - Matthew 7

by John Wesley

The sermon emphasizes the importance of judging with love and knowledge, avoiding hypocrisy, and doing God's will to bring forth good fruit.

Scripture: Matthew 7:1-5, Matthew 7:7-8, Matthew 7:12-16, Matthew 7:21-25, Luke 6:37, Luke 6:43-44

Topics: "True Faith", "Judgment"

Description

John Wesley emphasizes the importance of refraining from judgment, urging believers to focus on their own faults before addressing others. He warns that the measure we use to judge others will be the same measure applied to us by God, highlighting the need for mercy and love in our interactions. Wesley also cautions against false prophets who lead others astray with teachings that deviate from the narrow path of holiness. He concludes by affirming that true faith is demonstrated through actions, not mere verbal professions of belief, and that genuine followers of Christ will bear good fruit in their lives.

Transcript

Chap. VII. Our Lord now proceeds to warn us against the chief hinderances of holiness. And how wisely does he begin with judging? wherein all young converts are so apt to spend that zeal which is given them for better purposes. V. 1. Judge not - any man without full, clear, certain knowledge, without absolute necessity, without tender love. Luke 6:37.

Verse 2. With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you - Awful words! So we may, as it were, choose for ourselves, whether God shall be severe or merciful to us. God and man will favour the candid and benevolent: but they must expect judgment without mercy, who have showed no mercy.

Verse 3. In particular, why do you open your eyes to any fault of your brother, while you yourself are guilty of a much greater? The mote - The word properly signifies a splinter or shiver of wood. This and a beam, its opposite, were proverbially used by the Jews, to denote, the one, small infirmities, the other, gross, palpable faults. Luke 6:41.

Verse 4. How sayest thou - With what face?

Verse 5. Thou hypocrite - It is mere hypocrisy to pretend zeal for the amendment of others while we have none for our own. Then - When that which obstructed thy sight is removed.

Verse 6. Here is another instance of that transposition, where of the two things proposed, the latter is first treated of. Give not - to dogs - lest turning they rend you: Cast not - to swine - lest they trample them under foot. Yet even then, when the beam is cast out of thine own eye, Give not - That is, talk not of the deep things of God to those whom you know to be wallowing in sin. neither declare the great things God hath done for your soul to the profane, furious, persecuting wretches. Talk not of perfection, for instance, to the former; not of your experience to the latter. But our Lord does in nowise forbid us to reprove, as occasion is, both the one and the other.

Verse 7. But ask - Pray for them, as well as for yourselves: in this there can be no such danger. Seek - Add your own diligent endeavours to your asking: and knock - Persevere importunately in that diligence. Luke 11:9.

Verse 8. For every one that asketh receiveth - Provided he ask aright, and ask what is agreeable to God's will.

Verse 11. To them that ask him - But on this condition, that ye follow the example of his goodness, by doing to all as ye would they should do to you. For this is the law and the prophets - This is the sum of all, exactly answering Matthew 5:17. The whole is comprised in one word, Imitate the God of love. Thus far proceeds the doctrinal part of the sermon. In the next verse begins the exhortation to practise it.

Verse 12. Luke 6:31.

Verse 13. The strait gate - The holiness described in the foregoing chapters. And this is the narrow way. Wide is the gate, and many there are that go in through it - They need not seek for this; they come to it of course. Many go in through it, because strait is the other gate - Therefore they do not care for it; they like a wider gate. Luke 13:24.

Verse 15. Beware of false prophets - Who in their preaching describe a broad way to heaven: it is their prophesying, their teaching the broad way, rather than their walking in it themselves, that is here chiefly spoken of. All those are false prophets, who teach any other way than that our Lord hath here marked out. In sheep's clothing - With outside religion and fair professions of love: Wolves - Not feeding, but destroying souls.

Verse 16. By their fruits ye shall know them - A short, plain, easy rule, whereby to know true from false prophets: and one that may be applied by people of the weakest capacity, who are not accustomed to deep reasoning. True prophets convert sinners to God, or at least confirm and strengthen those that are converted. False prophets do not. They also are false prophets, who though speaking the very truth, yet are not sent by the Spirit of God, but come in their own name, to declare it: their grand mark is, "Not turning men from the power of Satan to God." Luke 6:43,44.

Verse 18. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither a corrupt tree good fruit - But it is certain, the goodness or badness here mentioned respects the doctrine, rather than the personal character. For a bad man preaching the good doctrine here delivered, is sometimes an instrument of converting sinners to God. Yet I do not aver, that all are true prophets who speak the truth, and thereby convert sinners. I only affirm, that none are such who do not.

Verse 19. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire - How dreadful then is the condition of that teacher who hath brought no sinners to God!

Verse 21. Not every one - That is, no one that saith, Lord, Lord - That makes a mere profession of me and my religion, shall enter -Whatever their false teachers may assure them to the contrary: He that doth the will of my Father - as I have now declared it. Observe: every thing short of this is only saying, Lord, Lord. Luke 6:46.

Verse 22. We have prophesied - We have declared the mysteries of thy kingdom, wrote books; preached excellent sermons: In thy name done many wonderful works - So that even the working of miracles is no proof that a man has saving faith.

Verse 23. I never knew you - There never was a time that I approved of you: so that as many souls as they had saved, they were themselves never saved from their sins. Lord, is it my case? Luke 13:27.

Verse 24. Luke 6:47.

Verse 29. He taught them - The multitudes, as one having authority - With a dignity and majesty peculiar to himself as the great Lawgiver, and with the demonstration and power of the Spirit: and not as the scribes - Who only expounded the law of another; and that in a lifeless, ineffectual manner.

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