

The Golden Rule

Introduction

This morning we come across some of the most well known sayings in the Bible and some of the most misused portions of the Bible.

I mentioned in my homily on Wednesday how our popular culture loves these words of Christ.

“Judge not” and *“do unto others”* are regularly employed in TV shows & movies but this is almost always done in a way to undermine the Christian faith.

But, in spite of this, these words of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount remain powerful and need to be heard by Christians regularly.

This morning we have the advantage of hearing these words of Christ within the context of the Sermon on the Mount that we have been considering for a few weeks now.

So often these words are taken out of their context, but when understood in-context, their rhetorical force grows even more.

With this said, I have divided this morning’s sermon into three parts that focus on three of Christ’s commands:

1. Seek first the Kingdom (6:22-24)
2. Remove the Log From Your Own Eye (7:1-5)
3. Do Unto others what you wish them to do unto you (7:6-12)

Seek First the Kingdom (6:22-24)

Our passage begins with Jesus’ teaching about the eye being the lamp of the body.

This connects back to his teaching about laying up treasures in heaven.

The eye is the organ of judgement.

You look and perceive and cast judgement with your eye.

What does your eye perceive/judge as treasure?

If your eye treasures God and stores up treasure in heaven then your whole body will be like a light shining on a hill.

However, if your eye treasures Mammon then you will end up hating God and your whole body will be dark.

And just as your heart follows your treasure to heaven or hell, your whole body follows your eye.

The judgement of your eye will either lead you to the service of your heavenly Father or to idols like Mammon.

Anxiety

This connects to Jesus' teaching on anxiety.

If your eye leads you into the service of Mammon then the way you think about what you are going to eat, drink, and wear will be filled with anxiety.

Mammon is a cruel master.

The man who gives himself to the service of Mammon will likely get a lot of money: And yet the man will never have enough.

Either he will be so enamored with the things of the world that he will constantly be spending his money on that which does not profit or bring life;

Or:

He will become avaricious, incapable of enjoying his money, hoarding it up like a miser, truly miserable.

Vicious Cycle of Judging by Mammon

In all of this, Jesus teaches how to exercise right judgement in regard to your earthly needs.

And, just as he did with almsgiving, prayer, and fasting, Jesus begins by showing how things go wrong.

Placing your trust in Mammon and not in God will only lead to anxiety.

Thus, the solution is to place your trust not in Mammon but in your heavenly Father who knows your needs and will meet them.

Action: Consider the Creation

But as Jesus has done throughout the Sermon on the Mount, his instruction is practical action.

Jesus provides you with action to take that will help you to place your trust in your Father as it relates to your needs.

Practically, Jesus calls you to look to the creation.

Like a greater Solomon, Jesus teaches wisdom by pointing to the creation:

Jesus commands his disciples to "Look to the birds of the air" and to "Consider the lilies".

God provides the birds with food.

God clothes the lilies that are alive today and gone tomorrow.

Then Jesus asks, "Are you not of more value than the birds?"

"Will your Father not clothe you?"

The answer of course is "YES!"

You are the beloved children of your heavenly Father!

Of course if he feeds the birds and clothes the lilies he will care for you.

But Jesus' instruction is for you to actually consider these things.

You need to actually do what Jesus says.

Go outside and consider the ways God provides for all his creatures and take heart in the fact that God will care for you to as his beloved child.

Irrational Anxiety

But Jesus also goes beyond this call for you to consider the creation.

Jesus also questions the rationality of your anxiety:

Which of your problems has your anxiety solved?

Which of your responsibilities and difficulties have been helped by your anxiety?

None of them!

Stressing about money doesn't put money on the table.

Being anxious about your problems doesn't solve them.

But you know who does provide for your needs? You know who does help you through your problems?

Your Father in heaven!

Jesus calls you to "seek first the kingdom" *by* looking to your heavenly Father

And just like Paul wrote to the Philippians, Jesus calls you to stand back and see how your Father "will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus." ([Phil 4:19](#))

As Jesus has done throughout, he calls on you to know who you are as a child of God and to begin living like it!

And this continues into chapter 7 which begins our next point:

Remove the Log From Your Own Eye (7:1-5)

As I mentioned above, Jesus is asking you the question: What does your eye *judge* to be of value?

Does your eye value earthly treasures or heavenly treasure?

Does your eye look to Mammon or your Father who is in heaven?

Do you fix your attention on your your earthly needs in such a way that you are filled with anxiety?

Or, do you consider how God feeds the birds of the air and clothes the lilies of the field and trust that your Father will feed and clothe you?

All of this is a focus on judgement, but in chapter 7, Jesus turns to the topic of judgement directly.

"Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgement you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you."

And again Jesus calls attention to the "eye" as the locus of judgement.

You look through your own eye to judge the speck in your brother's eye.

But of course you must not be a hypocrite with a log in your own eye.

Unjust Weights and Measures

The hypocrisy that Jesus points out in these verses is the tendency to judge others more strictly than we judge ourselves.

This is what Jesus means when he speaks about ignoring the log in your own eye.

Practicing such ways of judgement results in being subject to a greater degree of judgement by God.

We receive the same measure of judgement that we give.

If you are unmerciful in your judgement then God will be unmerciful to you.

Just as Jesus said in chapter 6, if you forgive then God will forgive you.

Again, Jesus offers you *practical* instruction.

For you will be **most** tempted toward this type unequal judgement in your close relationships.

Husbands and wives, do you judge your spouses behavior by a stricter standard than you judge your own?

Parents, do you judge your children with a different standard than the one you apply to yourself?

Employers, do you judge your employees by a different standard than the one you apply to yourself?

These are the questions that should lead to practical action.

Not No Judgement

But note this:

The goal of Jesus' teaching isn't to simply ignore specks in the eyes of others.

Sin needs to be dealt with and sometimes you really are the person God wants to use to help a brother remove a speck from their eye.

But Jesus tells you how you are to go about dealing with your brother's sin.

In verse 5 he states, "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."

As Paul teachings the Galatians ([Gal 6:1](#)), it is those who are "spiritual" who are to restore a brother.

Before dealing with your brother's sin you must deal with your own.

Because, once you have done that, you will actually be able to help your brother with his speck, you won't have a log in the way!

Learning to judge rightly means learning to be consistent in your judgement:

Judges others as you would like to be judged, and truly seeking the good of others.

All of God's judgements are fair and for our good.

Again, Jesus calls his followers to be like their heavenly Father.

And this call continues into our final point...

Do Unto Others What What You Wish They Would Do To You (7:6-12)

Our last section begins in verse 6, that states that one shouldn't give dogs what is holy or throw pearls before swine.

Its good to note here that scholars have puzzled over how this verse fits in the structure of Jesus' sermon.

Does it go with what has come before or what comes next?

I am convinced that it goes with the verses that follow about asking, seeking, and knocking.

Gentiles

Dogs and pigs are unclean animals and in the context they represent the gentile nations.

Jesus is speaking to an audience made up of first century Jews and his teachings have been hitting at things that are particularly relevant to his context.

But this especially comes out here.

Throughout the Sermon on the Mount Jesus has taught his disciples to put their trust in their heavenly Father and not in the things of earth.

Trusting in Princes

One of the things that was a constant temptation for the Jews of the first century was **to place their trust in Rome.**

Placing trust in gentile powers was nothing new for God's people.

This is why the Scriptures are filled with warning to **not** place one's trust in princes.

The prophets often condemned Israel for just that when things were difficult.

At different times Israel and Judah turned to the Assyrians, the Arameans, and the Egyptians for help instead of turning to God.

As Peter Leithart puts it:

Israel and Judah were constantly trying to play power politics with their Gentile neighbors, and they often actually took holy things from the temple and gave them to the dogs and swine.

In the first century, Israel had a decent setup in the Roman empire.

They didn't like the Romans, but things could definitely have been worse.

The Romans let them follow their own laws and worship their own God.

In this relationship with Rome, Israel was tempted to court Gentile power instead of trusting in God.

But as Israel's history shows, eventually Gentile powers turn on Israel and trample their holy things under foot.

This is the tragic irony that takes place in the Gospels.

The **Holy** One of Israel has finally come to his people in Christ to set them free.

And yet, they are more interested in courting Rome's favor than in trusting the Lord.

Remember what the crowds say to Pilate during Jesus' trial, "***We have no king but Caesar***".

Then they call Pilate to crucify their holy Lord and savior.

They literally give to Gentile dogs what is holy and threw the pearl of great price before swine.

Of course 40 years after Jesus' crucifixion, Rome would literally turn on Jerusalem and trample the Temple under their feet.

But What About You?

But Jesus' instruction is for you.

How are you to not give to dogs what is holy and to not throw your pearls before swine.

The answer is in our final verses.

Instead of looking to Rome, or to any other prince to save you, Jesus calls you to look to your Father to provide for you and protect you.

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you."

Just as an earthly father knows how to provide for and protect his own children, so too does your Father in heaven know how to give good things to you.

But **he calls you to ask!**

How often do you turn to God as a last resort?!?

Jesus wants you to know and trust that God is your loving Father, eager to provide for your needs.

Not a stingy political ruler doling out privileges in order to subdue his subjects.

God loves to give to you.

So ask him for what you think you need!

He loves to show you mercy and grace.

He loves to help you see clearly.

And because this is how God is, Jesus again calls you to be like God in the "Golden Rule".

“So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the prophets.”

As you fulfill the Law and the prophets by following the Law and the Prophets, you live as sons of your heavenly Father.

By seeking that which is truly good for others you love them just as your Father loves you.

So come to the table this morning to receive your Father’s love and ready to share his love with all he brings into your life.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit! AMEN!