



Hard Sayings of Jesus

Lesson 11: Pearls Before Swine and Bread to Dogs

Opening Prayer

Introduction

- 1.) Among churchgoers, what would you guess is the most quoted Bible passage?
- 2.) Which passage do you think is known and often quoted by those who know little about the Bible?
- 3.) Why do you think it's so often quoted?

Studying God's Word

Jesus talks about judgment a lot. He says that he'll judge the world. He says that believers will have a role in judging the world—even in judging angels (1 Corinthians 6:2,3)!

Yet Jesus clearly tells us *not* to judge in Matthew chapter 7. So what does he mean? What role does judgment have in the thoughts and life of a believer?

Matthew 7:1-5 “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. 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. 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 then turn and tear you to pieces.”

- 1.) How does Jesus (very seriously!) communicate to us that we shouldn't judge others?
- 2.) Verses 3-5 add a little more clarity for us. What kind of judgment is Jesus warning us about? Explain what this kind of judging looks like.
- 3.) Read **Matthew 7:5-6**. How can you be sure that Jesus does want you to do some judging? (And what's so hard about these words?)

4.) Agree or disagree (and why?): The judging that Jesus calls us to do shows no love or respect for people.

5.) Give an example of a time when you might have to put this into action.

Matthew 15:21-28 Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. ²² A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession." ²³ Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us." ²⁴

He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel." ²⁵ The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said. ²⁶ He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs." ²⁷ "Yes, Lord," she said, "but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." ²⁸ Then Jesus answered, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

Again, Jesus seems to speak in a way that shows very little love or respect for someone. In Matthew chapter 7, he called some people *swine* in judgment of the way they treated his Word. In Matthew chapter 15, he refers to a dear, hurting mother who came to him for help as a dog!

6.) What's so hard to understand about Jesus' reaction in these verses?

7.) This woman was a "Canaanite." If you can, give some cultural explanation for what's going on and for Jesus' reply to her.

8.) Translators often note that the word Jesus used for “dog” doesn’t mean a “street cur” (a mongrel dog), but more like a “house dog”—a pet. (Small comfort, perhaps!) Luther described Jesus’ reply as “More yes than no. Yea, it appears to be nothing but no, though in reality it’s nothing but yes.” Look at the situation. How was Jesus using this as a blessing for her—and for many others?

9.) Think of any times in your life when it felt like Jesus was treating you in a similar way. Did a blessing come from it? Share, if you are willing.

Summary

- Even when Jesus seems harsh or disrespectful, he’s acting in love and to further the gospel’s purpose.
- Though God clearly condemns hypocritical judging of others, he still calls Christians to use an honest, scriptural judgment out of love for God’s Word and our fellow human beings.
- When God seems to be presenting a cold face to us, faith has the opportunity to hold him to his grace and to grow.

Prayer