

Sermon to the saints of God which are at Topeka – Sunday, May 15, 2016

Part 2 of 2: Matt: 7:1-12

Beloved – I stand here today, a base, despised nobody – a servant of my God and therefore a servant to each of you – I say I stand here, asking your patience in looking at these weighty matters. It is an excellent exercise of our faith to wade into and be guided by the Word and the Spirit in these deep waters.

As a brief refresher – last Sunday I talked through the first 5 verses of Matthew 7, with an eye toward getting at the broader, fuller sense of their meaning and application for us; that 7:1 is one of the most bastardized and misapplied verses in the New Testament (both by 'Christians' and more generally by those who demand license for and sterilization of all sin and no calling out, rebuke or admonition for any sin); and that, while it is sound doctrine to warn against substituting one's own judgment, or sense of right and wrong, for God's, there is much more going on in this preachment by our Lord Jesus Christ – namely, the admonition against developing, maintaining and expressing a harshly censoring or censorious spirit, even hid behind the correct pronouncement and application of many of his moral laws – as it is in direct opposition to the spirit of Christian charity that defines our proper perspectives toward each other, as servants of the King – and is also a part of the larger framework that defines God's moral law, writ large, and the proper application of it on the ground, face to face with each other, in our lives. The desire to hop up in the judgment seat, as it were, is antithetical to a meek, humble, contrite, helpful and forgiving spirit that is the hallmark of true Christian charity.

Further, I spoke on the ineffectiveness and absolute dead end that is brought about, when trying to 'help' a brother with a mote in his eye, where a censorious spirit exists in the one who is attempted to provide the 'help;' that, on the contrary, it can produce strife, contention, confusion, and sow seeds that cause roots of bitterness to spring forth therefrom, and thereby many are defiled. We are all admonished to remove the beam that is in our own eye before we can, with any Christian authenticity, help another brother or sister in a meaningful, spiritual manner, else we are hypocrites. Consider the scripture:

Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his

lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses. – Matt. 18:23-35

The king of the place forgave that brother a great debt – the whole debt, which is emblematic of the debt of sin that we labor under, where a balance can never be zeroed out. Our King has so graciously forgiven our debt – the Lamb has paid it in full; so we have no business or justification in grabbing anyone by the throat, as it were - brother or stranger - and responding to any man in a ruthless, unforgiving manner – in short, being driven by a censorious spirit.

I here hope to clearly and unambiguously reiterate the point that I made last Sunday, that I intend no exalting of style over substance in these weighty matters – there are many times when good, plain, strong words of exhortation or admonition are precisely what the Lord has prescribed for us to apply to a situation, especially in situations where counsel has already been given and seemingly disregarded or not fully taken. The story that likens the kingdom of heaven to the king who forgave a great debt unto a man who then summarily holds his brother's feet over the fire in paying a much smaller debt is, after all, included in the same chapter of Matthew that also outlines a proper blueprint for church discipline regarding the progressive steps of helping a brother whose ox is in the ditch, spiritually speaking. We are not obliged to divest ourselves of scriptural reasoning, that we judge well of all men in all circumstances – on the contrary. Christian charity is founded upon the spiritual reason that the Lord has imbued us with, and there is a sweet harmony between reason and charity. We are not forbidden to judge all persons when there is plain and clear evidence that they are justly chargeable with evil, continual folly, or a disorderly walk. We act with a right and charitable spirit, when we judge men who have made a profession of faith, yet maintain a disorderly walk, with plain and satisfying evidence, after forbearance, much counsel and longsuffering. We also do not run afoul of a charitable spirit in judgment when we see those to be wicked men, and poor Godless wretches, who give flagrant proof that they are so by a course of wicked action. And therefore it is plain, that all judging as to others' state, or qualifications, or actions, is not an uncharitable censoriousness.

A couple added points here on the subject, before we move to verse 6 and beyond. First, a censorious spirit is not necessarily a 'general disposition' toward all men. A person can show forth a censorious spirit primarily toward specific others – most plainly those with whom they have had some difficulty with, or rough roads, in the past. Second, a censorious spirit can be held both by and against both sorts of men – the elect and those who seem, at least at the time, reprobate of any true affection or reverent fear of, and therefore obedience to, God. As to this doctrinal point where it regards the church, I just intend to be plain as to the spirit of professors of faith toward all men. A person who has made a profession of faith, shows forth fruit meet for repentance and who otherwise appears to walk orderly, can show forth

a censorious spirit toward both a brother or sister, as well as toward those who are without. The censorious spirit toward our co-elect has already been discussed at length. Toward those who are without, it can be most notably evidenced by the manner of our preaching or response to questions or comments from those to whom we preach. Other manifestations could be toward co-workers and classmates (either generally or with some specificity), or just random passers-by in the aisles of the grocery store. Consider the scripture:

Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. – Rom. 12:16-21. - And:

Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. – 1Pet. 2:12 - And:

He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit. – Pr. 17:27

Finally, the censorious man will not see his censoriousness for what it is without the help of the Lord - and thinks his very salvation depends on the vinegar in his nature. There are two sides to religious self-conceit; one is where the soul mostly contemplates its own superiority; the other side is where the soul mostly contemplates the defects of others. The censorious soul may think they bear fruit when they bring on a religious quarrel, or a sharp debate, or brow-beat some timid soul till he weeps. There is nothing more cheap and dangerous than a rigorous theology - for a censorious person to forever relinquish any and all severity toward all people, and at all times, and in all ways, would be the deepest crucifixion and would involve the most painful death to self and pride possible in this life. So, after all, nothing kills us to sin and self but the divine love of Christ. It is a thing to ask diligently of the Lord – as a thing we must have, not unlike the blessing for which Jacob wrestled the man in the desert all night. Hell is a prison for all that live and die in malice and want of charity, for all that are contentious and censorious, and out of that prison there is no rescue, no redemption, no escape, for all eternity.

Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not

knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, - Rom. 2:1-8

So, now to verse 6.

Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you. – Matt. 7:6

We have used this verse a lot in our preaching, over the years - and I began to wonder if we rightly construe it in all of our applications of the verse. What I was amazed by, more than anything else, when I started studying on these matters, is that there seems to be little to agreement on what this verse means (amongst the expositors that I consulted). Lots of overlap, but little point by point alignment. On the face of it, it would seem that, at the very least, we would need to come to a keen understanding of what these things are, or represent - in order to put it all together. This is a commandment of God, after all. So, in the context that Christ here supplies:

1. What is 'that which is holy'?
2. What are dogs?
3. What does it mean to 'give'?

I'm going to take these a little out of order, in trying to get to more concrete meanings of mostly abstract, vital, terms the Lord gave us.

First: What are dogs, in this context?

There are two Greek words translated "dogs" in the New Testament. One *kunarion* (koo-nar'-ee-on) refers to a mostly harmless household pet., or 'little dog,' or 'puppy' (not in the infant or less than full grown sense, but rather in the harmless or docile sense). Think Zilly. Consider the scripture:

Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour. – Matt. 15:21-28

The dogs that our Saviour was referring to, here, are household pets – such as are generally harmless and even, in some ways, somewhat useful, amusing or lightly comforting. These dogs, docile though they be, really want the food, or bread, that is on the table – meant to feed the people (children). And even if they aren't allowed, or can't figure out how to launch a flying squirrel belly flop onto the table to get at the bread, they nevertheless are quick to snap up any crumbs that fall off the plates of the people and onto the floor. In this context, Christ was talking to a woman of Canaan (so not a Jew), who is asking for and believing that His mercy is powerfully sufficient to cleanse her daughter of the devil that vexed her. As His disciples were imploring the Lord to shoo her off, Christ exclaimed that, at this time, His preaching and ministering was primarily toward the Jews, and the calling out of those of God's elect amongst the Jews. The woman worshipped and implored him – “Lord help me” (which is the only meaningful, lasting, and ultimately relevant help that any of us will ever receive). He told the woman that it wasn't appropriate, given His current mission, to spend His precious time and ministrations (that were intended, at this time, for the 'children,' or the Jews) and cast it (or use it, or give it) to the dogs (the Gentiles – she was a Canaanite who came to him from the coast of Tyre and Sidon). Her answer? (humbly) I know this – yet the (household, domesticated) dogs desire to eat of the crumbs that fall off their master's table. In other words, 'Lord, help me' (I'll take any help I can get from you, as it is the only meaningful help (having the faith that, in another place, the mere touching of His garment would heal). Christ then responded: ***“O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.”***

The other word translated from New Testament Greek into English as 'dog' is *kuōn* (koo-own) – and this is not a type of dog that you would let anywhere near the table of little children! This speaks of the kind of wild, mean, "junk-yard" kind of dog that ran around in packs and growled when you approached it. A dog of this kind was used as a metaphor for an utterly despicable person - someone who is utterly reprobate in words, deeds and demeanor. Consider the scripture:

For without (the kingdom of God, eternally) are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. – Rev. 22:15

This kind of dog was also used to describe those who were viciously opposed to God's call for holy living, and who made themselves the enemies of God's people. The Holy Spirit, through the apostle Paul, used this word to describe those who proved to be dangerous opponents to the ministry of the gospel. He told the Philippian believers:

Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. - Phil. 3:2

The same sense, though not the same word (as the Old Testament was written in Hebrew and Aramaic), is seen in many places:

For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. – Ps. 22:16

Thou therefore, O LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel, awake to visit all the heathen: be not merciful to any wicked transgressors. Selah. They return at evening: they make a noise like a dog, and go round

about the city. Behold, they belch out with their mouth: swords are in their lips: for who, say they, doth hear?" – Ps. 59:5-7

But be not thou far from me, O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me. Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog. Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns. – Ps. 22:19-21

This type of dog is not just an annoying, scavenging pest, but of a ruthless, libidinous and unclean sort; consumed only with the greediness of what it wants and how to take it - whether by force, coercion or by simply waiting till others are asleep. As far as seeing who these dogs are, in that we are enjoined not to 'give that which is holy unto them' – I don't believe that it is implied at all that you can never tell whether a dog is of this sort until he bears his teeth at you. If you see dogs running in packs, with no hints or evidence of either domesticity or a generally docile demeanor, you don't have to wait until they bear their teeth or charge you to know that you should stay away from them. But certainly, once you see that behavior exhibited, getting away is the prudent move.

Second: What is 'that which is holy,' in this context, and what does it mean to 'give' it?

The Greek word rendered as 'holy' in the verse is *hagios* (hag'-ee-os) – from the word *hagos* (an awful thing) – not 'aweful' in a colloquial sense, as bad – but rather 'aweful' in the sense of being in great awe or amazement. Its meanings are: a holy characteristic of God, separated to God, worthy of veneration, descriptions of God 1) Its highest application is to God himself, in his purity, majesty and glory. 1a) Of things and places which have a claim to reverence as sacred to God (as in the temple), 1b) Of persons employed by him, as angels: prophets, apostles, 2) Applied to persons as separated to God's service: 2a) Of Christ:, 2b) Of Christians: 3) In the moral sense of sharing God's purity, 4) Of pure, clean sacrifices and offerings.

In this verse, it could be more precisely rendered as 'the holy' ('that which is' seems to be used to make the English be more grammatically sound). I perceive that answering these two elements, 'that which is holy' and to 'give' go hand in glove. And I must admit that this was amongst the most difficult aspects of attempting to delve deep into these things, as I kept struggling with that aspect of the verse. What 'that which is holy' is, in this context, must be something that people are capable of 'giving,' or the practical application of the exhortation from our Saviour eludes any firm grasp. 'Ought' implies 'can.' If I have no ability to 'give' a thing (in any sense), then warning me not to 'give' it is a puzzle that I can never solve – and the Lord certainly meant for us to know these things as evidenced by Him exhorting us to it – in His time, as He provides all illumination. In this context, for instance, it doesn't satisfy a Christian sensibility to imply the 'Holy Spirit,' as that is something that we certainly do not think of having the ability to bestow, or 'give' to a man. There is certainly clear precedence for the bestowing of the Holy Spirit upon men, in a practical sense, as there were men who received the Holy Spirit from the laying on of hands by the apostles; however, this still seems to me that this is not an act of individual determination, or judgment, that the Lord exhorts us to apply in Matt. 7:6, but that the apostles were the practical delivery vessels for that which God had purposed to pour out. And it also seems a rare and special gift, bestowed upon those blessed brothers amidst the turmoil and glory during the birth and early growth of the New Testament churches:

But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries. But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done. Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (for as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me. –Acts. 8:9-24

Certainly the pinnacle of 'that which is holy' is the Lord Himself – but no man can bestow, or 'give' the Lord to anyone. However, the Lord does equate Himself with His Word:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. – Jn. 1:1-2

And we can, and do, 'give' (in a practical sense) the Word of God to all men – when we preach sound doctrine. And we are continually exhorted, throughout scripture, to speak His word:

Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. - 2Tim. 4:2-5

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. – Mk. 16:15

Going into the world and doing the work of an evangelist serves a somewhat different function than the work of preaching from this pulpit. By the Lord's hand, it reaches people in this information age that is truly an amazing work of our blessed Creator, but the preaching from this pulpit is largely a function of spiritual nourishment, or feeding the sheep. Going into the world (by spreading the Gospel online, or street preaching) also serves the functions of: causing the people to know their abominations, hardening

hearts, blinding eyes, stopping up ears, not suffering sin upon our neighbors – and it is the chief, God-given mechanism (the foolishness of preaching) whereby some are saved;

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. - Ro 10:17

Literally hundreds of verses throughout the Bible speak to the many functions of preaching, but suffice it to say, we are bidden to do that work, and cannot put it off or run from it, as was Jonah's initial reaction to the Lord's commandment. So 'give not that which is holy,' certainly cannot mean to not preach. It is possible to see it, however, as recognizing that there are circumstances under which we may not simply stand toe to toe with those who show themselves to be the ruthless type of dogs spoken of above. Sometimes a dog only shows himself to be of the more ruthless nature after a time of interaction with it – in that case, it may mean that we should not 'continue' to 'give that which is holy' once we see the dog to be the dog (if 'that which is holy' means God's Word). Consider the scripture:

And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrhah in the day of judgment, than for that city. – Mk. 6:11

There is a more abrupt "departing thence," at the rejection of God's word (as opposed to those who receive and hear you are those who you are spiritually apt to stay with and minister longer to – as in the case of some interested soul who we have run against who we might sup with and speak more with after some street preaching and afterward stay in contact with); and the shaking off of the dust "for a testimony against them" is the forensic evidence that faithful preachers of the Gospel had been with them, and were rejected by them – and that such rejection of both His Word and those who faithfully deliver it to them (think Matthew 25:31-46 – the parable of the sheep and the goats) –will be an aggravation of their guilt, and increase their punishment in another, eternal day. That the ministers of the Gospel dispensation, the harbingers of the Messiah, who were sent to publish his Gospel, to proclaim him as king, and to declare that his kingdom is at hand, had been amongst them with that message of peace - and they had despised them.

It may also mean, if 'giving that which is holy' is the preaching of the Gospel, that we can tell some dogs to be dogs on the face of the matter alone, before we even step very far into the dark alleyway. After all, we are called by Christ to use our judgment in that there are occasions which we might otherwise 'give that which holy unto,' someone, and are admonished against doing it – specifically in the case that we see the person, or persons, to be 'dogs.' I'm not confident, in all matters, what that looks like, in practical application, but I ask the Lord to show us a thing. It could mean that those who are already known to us as 'dogs' - those who have already shown a great outward contempt for this blessed Word of God, and by extension, his preachers – are to be avoided. We have already seen situations where the Lord has worked in this body where it regards the application of such discernment or judgment.

This analysis is not meant to be dispositive of the matter. Frankly, I have not, as of yet, felt fully satisfied with a clear and unobstructed landing strip on this verse of scripture. I continue to ask the Lord for help here, as it produces a certain amount of uneasiness for me to be commanded of the Lord to do a thing, or not to do a thing, and to have some lack of clarity as to both meaning and therefore practical

application. But we walk in the path that is illuminated solely and providentially by the only source of Light. I do feel compelled, however, that this verse – 6 – whatever its practical application, is an opposing bookend or guardrail, set against the spiritual meaning of verse 1. In other words, where verse one (and following) warns us against maintaining a harshly censorious spirit (as opposing true Christian charity), verse 6 seems to speak against allowing true Christian charitable judgment to atrophy, or pervert, into a lack of keen spiritual judgment – much in the way we see ‘Christians’ (some of whom are in actuality the ‘dogs’ mentioned in the verse) lazily, greedily, and licentiously wrest that blessed concept of ‘charity’ into sloppy, worldly ‘sugarcoating’ of sin and failing to have any spiritual discernment about keeping ‘that which IS holy’ AS holy, consecrated, and separated off in our hearts and minds. Consider the scripture:

Ye have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment? – Mal. 2:17

So inaptly applying, or wrongly construing, any aspects of God’s holy word to those who it clearly doesn’t apply may be a sense in which we are not to give that which is holy unto the dogs. While we are enjoined against a harshly censorious spirit in verse 1, we are similarly warned against sloppy misapplication of holy scriptural concepts in judgment, administration of His holy ordinances, membership, close fellowship, with those who might demand it under a satanic ‘umbrella’ of universal salvation, or that God has pleasure in them, or casts His favor, upon those who willfully do evil (which is the overwhelming majority of the so-called ‘religious world’).

In the original language of the New Testament, the very same phrase used here - "the holy" - is one that's used to describe our Lord Jesus Christ. Peter once rebuked the Jews in the temple by telling them that they had delivered up Jesus to be crucified; saying, ". . . You have denied the Holy One [literally, "the Holy"] and the Just . . ." (Acts 3:14). I suggest that when Jesus speaks here of "the holy" (or “that which is holy”), He is making a general reference to anything that has to do with Him who is our Savior and our great sacrifice for sin - whether it be the truth of His gospel, or the teachings concerning Him from the Scriptures, or the things God does to lead us to worshiping Him and serving Him, or even the desire to lovingly remove a speck from a brother's eye in Christ's name. It is ALL to be treated as a very sacred and honored thing to be entrusted with. It is all to be, as it were, engraved with the title, "HOLINESS TO THE LORD" (Zech. 14:20).

The second clause of verse 6 seems a bit easier, in light of a parallel structure with the first clause:

neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

Pearls, in scripture, represent that which is great value. Consider the scripture:

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it. – Matt. 13:45-46

Note here, that our Saviour refers to them as 'your pearls' – so those who are warned to refrain from casting them must perceive them to be of GREAT value. If, in parallel structure, the 'your pearls' means roughly the same things as 'that which is holy' in the first clause, then a false preacher or false professor could never be said to be casting 'his pearls' (or the word of God) anywhere (as in preaching to a congregation), as the word of God is not of GREAT value to him/her (to the forsaking, or selling, of all other things, to 'buy' it). He/she/it has no pearls to cast, in that arena. To the contrary, they are of the swine – which represent the filthy, libidinous, unclean man, who has no sincere interest in spiritual, or 'holy' things. This is earmarked by how the swine responds to the pearls. The swine merely 'tramples them (the pearls) under their feet' – failing to see any value in them at all – stepping on them as pebbles and twigs crushed down into the mire. A swine would eat mud and its own excrement if it meant digging down to get at a rotten apple core or some grains of corn mixed into it, but would simply mindlessly and without interest 'trample' upon 'your pearls'. Finally, either a swine or a dog would turn and rend you – as being far from aptly described as someone who merely shows no interest in spiritual things, but someone who sees the 'holy' as that which is totally devoid of value, beyond some social, moral veneer for personal gain. But the GREAT value of the pearls and that which is holy is a working in our hearts by God. In both clauses of this blessed commandment, we are exhorted to see the dogs and the swine – to judge righteously, and not be fooled as religious simpletons often are.

But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. – 2Pet. 2:22

Now to verses 7-11:

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him? – Matt. 7:7-11

Ask, seek, and knock for what? Ask and you will receive. Seek and you will find. Knock and it will be opened to you. Given a heart to know your God, it will at some point first creep into the edges of your understanding, then eventually sit fat and weighty upon your heart, the need for expressly the type of counter-carnal spiritual disposition and discernment - the guardrails, so to speak, that are so graciously outlined by our Saviour in verses 1-6. We need that – we see that it is right, and true, and clearly manifested by our Christ in his ministry. We see that doing things any other way – 'our way' – sowing to, pandering to or making any prolonged occasion for the flesh, is dangerously contrary to every beautiful notion shown forth by our gracious Savior – FULL OF GRACE. In short, a godly man desires and aspires to, only with the Lord's help, an 'excellent spirit.'

He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit. – Pr. 17:27 - And:

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you. – Phillipians 4:8-9

Christ points out clearly that even evil men (which we are, if bereft of the imputed righteousness of Christ, and of gifts of grace that follow therefrom) know how to, and are inclined towards giving their children what they desire and ask for. How cruel it would be for your son to ask a fish for nourishment and you instead hand him a serpent that would straightway instead wound him. How much more will God not give, in abundance, those good things which HIS children see the need for, and therefore GREATLY desire and ask Him for? But we stand in need of seeing the desperate need for these things in abundance – as being those things that allow us to faithfully emulate Christ in warring against this vile, wretched flesh minute by minute, day by day. Let us all therefore cling to the admonitions given unto us by our Christ in these verses, and desire that sweet capacity for the sweetness of proper, humble spiritual discernment; neither being censorious nor spiritual simpletons toward any man.

Finally, verse 12:

Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets. – Matt. 7:12

This is commonly called ‘Christ’s Golden Rule,’ so-named for its great value, and is an expression of the royal law – and I submit to you, that as such, is not only a proper summing up of the 11 verses that come before it, but as the Saviour expresses it: “this is the law and the prophets” – and without it in vain do men pretend to religion.

Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. – Matt. 5:23-24

Here is a smattering of faithful words by our brothers who have labored before us in the ripe, abundant vineyards of the Lord on this weighty matter:

Barnes: Act not from selfishness or injustice, but put yourself in the place of the other, and ask what you would expect of him. This would make you impartial, candid, and just. It would destroy avarice, envy, treachery, unkindness, slander, theft, adultery, and murder.

Calvin: We are here informed, that the only reason why so many quarrels exist in the world, and why men inflict so many mutual injuries on each other, is, that they knowingly and willingly trample justice under their feet, while every man rigidly demands that it shall be maintained towards himself. Where our own

advantage is concerned, there is not one of us, who cannot explain minutely and ingeniously what ought to be done. And since every man shows himself to be a skillful teacher of justice for his own advantage, how comes it, that the same knowledge does not readily occur to him, when the profit or loss of another is at stake, but because we wish to be wise for ourselves only, and no man cares about his neighbors? What is more, we maliciously and purposely shut our eyes upon the rule of justice, which shines in our hearts. Christ therefore shows, that every man may be a rule of acting properly and justly towards his neighbors, if he do to others what he requires to be done to him. He thus refutes all the vain pretenses, which men contrive for hiding or disguising their injustice. Perfect justice would undoubtedly prevail among us, if we were as faithful in learning active charity, (if we may use the expression,) as we are skillful in teaching passive charity.

Clarke: None but he whose heart is filled with love to God and all mankind can keep this precept, either in its spirit or letter. Self-love will feel itself sadly cramped when brought within the limits of this precept; but God hath spoken it: it is the spirit and design of the law and the prophets; the sum of all that is laid down in the Sacred Writings, relative to men's conduct toward each other.

Henry: Christ came to teach us, not only what we are to know and believe, but what we are to do; what we are to do, not only toward God, but toward men; not only towards our fellow-disciples, those of our party and persuasion, but towards men in general, all with whom we have to do. The golden rule of equity is, to do to others as we would they should do to us. This is grounded upon that great commandment, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. As we must bear the same affection to our neighbour that we would have borne to ourselves, so we must do the same good offices. We must put other people upon the level with ourselves, and reckon we are as much obliged to them, as they to us. We are as much bound to the duty of justice as they, and they as much entitled to the benefit of it as we. We must, in our dealings with men, suppose ourselves in the same particular case and circumstances with those we have to do with, and deal accordingly. If I were making such a one's bargain, labouring under such a one's infirmity and affliction, how should I desire and expect to be treated? And this is a just supposition, because we know not how soon their case may really be ours: at least we may fear, lest God by his judgments should do to us as we have done to others, if we have not done as he commands.

I hope that something in this has been nourishing. I have been greatly nourished and refreshed in the labor, and by the good words and souls around me – as guided and built up by the unsearchable wisdom and mercies of our God.

I love you all.