

“Do Not Cast Your Pearls before Swine”  
(Matthew 7:6)

Introduction: The Lord has been teaching us in the section of the Sermon on the Mount, that we must be very careful when we pass judgment on others. He told us, on the one hand, that we must never condemn another person, or act as a judge over them. We are not judges. We do not have the authority to condemn another or to commit their souls to the pits of hell. Only God has the right to do that. We are merely servants, like any other man, who will also stand before the Supreme Judge on the day of judgment to receive what we have done while on the earth. And Jesus warns us here that the way we judge others in this life is the same way that God will judge us on the day of judgment. On the other hand, Jesus also told us that there is a sense in which we are to judge. We are to make evaluations of others actions. We are to decide whether they are right or wrong. And if they are wrong, we are to go to them and reprove them. We are to seek to turn their feet off the path of destruction and back onto the path of righteousness. But in order to do this, we must be qualified. We must be spiritual. We must be able to deal righteously with our own sins first, before we come to another to administer reproof. How can we possibly hope to help anyone else, if our own lives are scandalously out of order? Now Jesus did not say that if we had any imperfections, that we could not help our brethren. But He did say that we must not have any glaring sins, if we are to be qualified to help.

But Jesus goes on now to give us another element which must be present in any situation before we can reprove another. He says,

***Not only must we be qualified to reprove, but the person to whom we come must be qualified to receive reproof.*** In other words, the one whom we seek to correct must be reproveable, or open to reproof.

**I. Jesus says, “Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine.”**

A. Now first, Jesus speaks in this verse about “what is holy,” and about “pearls.”

What is He referring to?

1. That which is holy is the sacred food of the priests.
  - a. It is the offerings, the sacrifices of the Lord which are brought to the priest.
  - b. It is the priest’s portion, that which he receives from the Lord for doing what it is that the Lord has called him to.
  - c. These are considered holy things because they are set apart to the Lord.
2. And you know what pearls are.
  - a. Pearls are precious jewels, sought after for their beauty.
  - b. They are prized because of their great worth.
3. But what is Jesus really speaking about here? Did His disciples have access to the holy food of the Temple? Were they very likely to have pearls?

- a. No. Jesus is using them as emblems, as symbols for those things which are good and precious.
- b. In connection with what comes before, He is speaking about good counsel. He is talking about reproof.
  - a. Wisdom is a good, and truth is excellent. They are worth more than anything else in this world.
  - b. This is why Solomon tells us, “Buy truth, and do not sell *it*, *get* wisdom and instruction and understanding” (Prov. 23:23).
  - c. Truth is precious. It is worth far more than the things of this world which perish. This is what we are to be gathering. We are to be hoarding it up like greedy misers. If you are a Christian here this morning, you are. Only the one who is born again sees its worth. Only the true believer gathers all he can find.
  - d. But as we saw last week, reproof is one of the ways in which this truth is given to us.
  - e. This is the way that the Lord sometimes ordains that it will be administered to us.
  - f. We are still ignorant of many things. And we are still filled with the blinding influences of sin. Because of this, we will often do things which are wrong, things which are sinful. And when we do, we need to be instructed with the truth. We need to be corrected through it.
  - g. But this is why reproof is so precious, because it is the God-ordained way of administering that truth, when and where we need it most.
  - h. This is why David said, “Let the righteous smite me in kindness and reprove me; it is oil upon the head; do not let my head refuse it” (Psalm 141:5). Truth is precious to the Christian, even during the times when he is in sin.
  - i. Solomon writes, “*Like* an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold is a wise reprover to a listening ear” (Prov. 25:12). The work of the reprover is valuable and beautiful.
  - j. Solomon also writes, “My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD, or loathe His reproof, for whom the LORD loves He reproves, even as a father, the son in whom he delights. How blessed is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gains understanding. For its profit is better than the profit of silver, and its gain than fine gold. She is more precious than jewels; and nothing you desire compares with her. Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, and happy are all who hold her fast” (Prov. 3:11-18).
  - k. To refuse the truth is to choose the path of death. To accept it is to take hold of life.
  - l. Therefore, when your brother or sister comes to you with the truth, when they come to reprove you for some sin you are in, don’t refuse it. It is for your good. It is for your spiritual well-being. There is no other medicine that can treat your sickness, no other procedure that will heal your disease. Paul wrote to Timothy, “Pay close attention to yourself and to your

teaching; persevere in these things; for as you do this you will insure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you” (1 Tim. 4:16).

4. But these holy things and pearls can also refer to the truth delivered in any connection.
  - a. Reproof is not only for the covenant people of God. It’s also for those outside the church.
  - b. Reproof to them comes in the form of the Gospel.
    - (i) This, I believe, is the main reason why we are very reluctant to tell others about it.
    - (ii) The Gospel isn’t just good news, it is also bad news. When you tell someone the good news about a Savior from sin, it automatically tells them that they are sinners. When you tell someone that Jesus has come to save those who believe in Him from hell, it also tells them that they are on their way to hell. This is why they need Him.
    - (iii) The Gospel contains a built-in rebuke. But it is a rebuke that people need to hear, or they will never be saved. Why would anyone come to Christ, if they didn’t see the danger they were in? Why would you take strong medicine, or radical treatments for a disease you didn’t think you had? You wouldn’t! Neither will any man ever truly reach out for Christ until they begin to understand why they need Him.
    - (iv) But this doesn’t mean that the Gospel is not precious. It is the tree of life which God has provided for sinners. It is worth more than gold, or rubies; more than a whole world full of these things. It is precious and holy. And nothing you desire compares with it.
    - (v) It is this that you must lay hold of. It is the One who has come to bring the Gospel that you must believe in. The Lord Jesus Christ, who is the truth itself, is precious beyond words.

B. But now secondly, who are the “dogs” and “swine” Jesus speaks of here?

1. It’s not hard to think about what Jesus literally means.
  - a. Unlike the Leviathan which we don’t see everyday, dogs and pigs are very common.
  - b. By dog, He might have in mind a domesticated dog, or a wild dog. And by swine, He undoubtedly means those animals from which we get pork.
2. But what do these two animals symbolize in Jesus’ statement?
  - a. Some have seen the dog to be a symbol of the wild and vicious persecutor.
  - b. And some have seen the swine to be a symbol of the one who is self-indulgent in the things which are sinful.
  - c. But certainly we would have to say, from what Jesus says here, they refer to those persons to whom we are not to give the precious truth of God.

## **II. Jesus is telling us that there are some people who are not fit to hear the truth of God.**

A. He says, “Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before

swine.”

1. A dog was not to eat the consecrated food, that would be sacrilegious.
2. And a pig was not the proper recipient of something as precious as pearls. They didn't know the difference between pearls and rocks.
3. Jesus tells us that there are also men, who should not be given the truth and who do not understand its value.

B. But who are these people?

1. Is Jesus referring to anyone who is unconverted? After all, they might fit this description.
  - a. The Bible says that all men hate God and would, like the Pharisees, put Him to death on a cross, or even worse, if they could get their hands on Him. No one who is unconverted really understands the value of God's truth. They are as insensitive as the pigs who can't tell the difference between pearls and rocks.
  - b. Is Jesus saying that we shouldn't tell anyone the truth; we shouldn't witness to anyone? Should we all pack our bags and move to a Christian commune and wait for the Lord to bring those whom He will save to us?
  - c. No. Jesus Himself went to preach the Gospel to sinners, even to the publican and harlots. This can't be what He means.
2. Then, to whom is He referring?
  - a. He is speaking about those who are so hardened, and who have so little of the restraining grace of God in their lives, that they will not listen to truth, but respond with anger and hatred toward it.
  - b. How do we know this?
    - (i) Jesus says these are the kind of men who trample the holy and precious truths of God under their feet. They won't listen to it. They disregard it. They don't take it to heart.
    - (ii) But they are also the kind of men who will lash out at the one who brings them the truth. Their hatred is such that they will despise anything that is connected to it.
3. Jesus is saying that when a person gets this bad, you are no longer to give them the truth.
  - a. In the original language, He says that when a person is in this state, you should not even try.
    - (i) There are those who are like Nabal, who was “a worthless man” (1 Sam. 25:17). Their hearts are so hard that no one can speak to them.
    - (ii) There are those who will refuse to listen to the truth. Amaziah, king of Judah, was such a man. In 2 Chronicles, we read, “Then the anger of the LORD burned against Amaziah, and He sent him a prophet who said to him, ‘Why have you sought the gods of the people who have not delivered their own people from your hand?’ And it came about as he was talking with him that the king said to him, ‘Have we appointed you a royal counselor? Stop! Why should you be struck down?’ Then the prophet

stopped and said, ‘I know that God has planned to destroy you, because you have done this, and have not listened to my counsel’” (25:15-16).

(iii) He would not listen to the truth, for the Lord was handing him over to judgement.

b. Now perhaps some of you thought that it was always your duty to talk to all men about Christ, no matter what the danger. But this isn’t always the case. There are instances in Scripture when even the apostles turned away from men because of their response to the Gospel.

(i) Jesus told His disciples, before He sent them out to preach, that this would sometimes be necessary. He said, “And whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake off the dust of your feet. Truly I say to you, it will be more tolerable for *the* land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city” (Matt. 10:14-15).

(ii) This is exactly what Paul and Barnabas did when the Jews rejected the truth in Pisidian Antioch. Luke records, “Now when *the meeting of* the synagogue had broken up, many of the Jews and of the God-fearing proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, were urging them to continue in the grace of God. And the next Sabbath nearly the whole city assembled to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy, and *began* contradicting the things spoken by Paul, and were blaspheming. And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, ‘It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. For thus the Lord has commanded us, “I have placed you as a light for the Gentiles, that you should bring salvation to the end of the earth.”’ And when the Gentiles heard this, they *began* rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was being spread through the whole region. But the Jews aroused the devout women of prominence and the leading men of the city, and instigated a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district. But they shook off the dust of their feet *in protest* against them and went to Iconium. And the disciples were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 13:43-52).

(iii) God was handing them over for judgment. There was no need to speak to them any more. The same thing was once true of a whole tribe in Israel. The Lord said through Hosea the prophet, “Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone” (4:17).

4. Now does this mean that whoever is hostile to the truth is given over by God to judgment and forever lost? No. Some are and some aren’t.

a. There was a time when the disciples were with Jesus when the Samaritans of a certain village would not receive Him because He was traveling to Jerusalem. But Jesus did not give them up as lost.

- b. When James and John offered to call down fire from heaven to destroy them, Jesus rebuked them, and said, “You do not know what kind of spirit you are of; for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them” (Luke 9:55-56). Though they rejected Him then, this didn't mean that they would reject Him forever. There was still hope. They had not committed the unpardonable sin.
- c. Jesus said, “It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs” (Matt. 15:26). But we must be careful whom we condemn as dogs and swine. There have been those who have died from some illness because the doctor thought that they were too far gone to treat.
- d. To sum up what we have seen, Jesus is telling us that when men are in a hardened state, it is impossible to bring reproof to them. We may weep for them, pray for them, and warn others about them, but we must not reprove them, lest they cast away our words and turn and injure us as well.
- e. I would imagine that all of us here know at least one person like this.
  - (i) If you have been at all at the business of speaking the truth to others, you must. Jesus says that there will be those who will hate you because you speak the truth.
  - (ii) But when this happens, the Lord tells you to back off. Perhaps they will listen to someone else. Perhaps the Lord will deal with them directly. But you must not do so, or else you may be hurt.
  - (iii) Jesus doesn't want us to put ourselves into unnecessary danger. There will be plenty of people who will get angry enough with us when we talk to them about their sin, the first time. We don't need to add to that number also those whom we know will get angry.
- f. But this also warns us not to give up on anyone too quickly. Jesus has already told us not to be quick to condemn, unless we want the same treatment from God.
- g. As a rule of thumb, don't waste your reproofs on someone you know will get angry at you. Don't use your healing words on those who will only return hateful words. Do not take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs (Matt. 15:26). Feed God's truth to God's people and to those He's working in. Admonish and reprove them, so that they might come to Christ, and if they have come, that they might grow. Be prepared as well, to receive the admonition and reproof that you need.
- h. May the Lord grant us wisdom this morning to receive this Word and apply it to our lives. And may He now also grant us His grace through the Bread of life we are about to receive, that we might have the strength to do so. Amen.