

LESSON 12: RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE KINGDOM (PART 6: Matt. 7:1-12)

I. INTRODUCTION: I

1. **2** Today we continue our study of the greatest sermon ever preached by the greatest preacher that ever lived...Jesus' sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7; cf. Lk. 6:20-38; 11 & 12).
2. **3** Recall we've been considering Jesus' statement: "*For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.*" (Matt. 5:20)
3. Jesus has already given us several examples of the superior righteousness required in His kingdom.
4. In the process Jesus gets to the heart of true righteousness, because true righteousness begins in our hearts! Matt. 15:17-20
 "If that does not make a person squirm, then he probably is not understanding what he is reading."
 (John Smith, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 34)
5. Through these contrasts, Jesus sweeps away the spin and gets to the heart of the true righteousness kingdom citizens must possess.
6. At the beginning of chapter 6 Jesus turns from addressing aspects of moral righteousness (chapter 5) to religious righteousness; the scribes and Pharisees not only perverted morality, they were also corrupt religiously (vv. 1-18: charitable deeds, prayer, model prayer, forgiving others, fasting).
7. ****** In Matthew 6:19-34 continued contrasting unacceptable and acceptable righteousness by addressing some threats to kingdom righteousness. Jesus addresses two related themes:
 - A. Materialism: what is the focus of our lives? Is the focus of our life material or spiritual?
 - B. Trust: do we trust in God's providential power to provide for our physical needs?
8. It is so important to ask ourselves some questions Jesus' teaching raises here. Regarding my behavior in His kingdom:
 - ☛ Why do I do what I do? Habit, tradition or from the heart?
 - ☛ Because it's expected by society/brethren; or because it's God's will?
 - ☛ To gain notoriety/popularity? Or, to receive the praise of God?
 - ☛ To glorify myself or God? What are my motives? Pure or impure?
9. **4** Acceptable righteousness flows from possession of the basic character traits of the beatitudes.
 - A. The character of kingdom citizens is radically different from people of the world, and these traits are absolute and enduring requirements:

☛ "poor in spirit" (5:3)	☛ "mourn" (5:4)
☛ "meek" (5:5)	☛ "hunger and thirst for righteousness" (5:6)
☛ "merciful" (5:7)	☛ "pure in heart" (5:8)
☛ "peacemakers" (5:9)	☛ "persecuted for righteousness sake" (5:10)
 - B. And, kingdom citizens must put that character to work in the world!
 - (1) Salt of the earth: 5:13
 - (2) Light of the world: 5:14-16
10. **5** So, let's continue our study of the Sermon on the Mount considering Matthew 7:1-12.

II. Discussion: (continued from Lesson #11)**11. 6 Jesus teaches on judging:** Matt. 7:1-5

- A. Matthew 7:1: most oft quoted & misused Bible passage: “Judge not, that you be not judged.”
- (1) Non-Christians and Christians alike misuse this passage by using it in attempts to justify behaviors or attitudes plainly condemned by God’s Word.
 - (2) Even when you only point out sin in a general way, be prepared to have “Judge not, that you be not judged,” thrown into your face.
- B. **** Context:** to properly understand this section, we must keep it in the context of Jesus’ sermon and harmonize Jesus’ statement with the entirety of Scripture.
- (1) Remember: this is in the context of the superior righteousness required of kingdom citizens versus the self-righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees.
 “The Pharisees took it upon themselves to go up and down passing censorious and unjust judgment upon others, while blind to their own glaring faults. The disciple of Christ is to conduct himself in a manner exactly the reverse: unsparingly judging himself and refusing to invade the office of God where others are concerned.” (Pink, p. 261)
 - (2) **Key:** Jesus is not making a blanket condemnation of kingdom citizens making any judgments (i.e., discernments).
 - (3) Jesus is condemning the practice of religious zealots like the scribes and Pharisees who engaged in hypocritical, hypercritical, censorious (severely critical) judging.
 “Once matured we are to have the character of Christ. It is then that we face the temptation to be harshly critical of those who have not so matured. Our relationship with brethren who have faults must be merciful, reasonable and free from hypocritical or hypercritical judgment.” (Smith, p. 71)
- C. **7 The Bible requires Christians to make judgments.**
- (1) Jesus is not making a blanket condemnation of a Christian ever making a “judgment.”
 - (2) To make a “judgment” means to make a decision, to form an objective opinion, to come to a conclusion based on circumstances presented to the mind.
 - (3) **** This is not what Jesus is condemning, for there are many situations where it is absolutely necessary for a Christian to make such “judgments.”**
 - (4) Indeed, there are many passages of Scripture that require a Christian to do some “judging.”
1 Jn. 4:1: “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”
Eph. 5:11: “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.”
Gal. 6:1: “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.”
 - (5) **** Obedience to these passages (and hundreds of others) is impossible without making judgments of others (cf. 1 Cor. 10:15; Lk. 12:57; Jn. 7:24; Heb. 5:14; Matt. 7:15, 20; 2 Thess. 3:6; Rom. 16:17; Psalms 141:5; Proverbs 18:13).**
 - (6) **8 Think!** If Jesus were making a blanket condemnation of judging; we could never:
 - (a) Identify a false teacher: Matt. 7:15; 1 Jn. 4:1
 - (b) Practice church discipline: 2 Thess. 3:6
 - (c) Help a brother overcome by sin: Gal. 6:1; Jas. 5:20
 - (d) Evangelize the lost: Lk. 19:10; Mk. 16:15-16

Ezek. 33:7-9: “So you, son of man: I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore you shall hear a word from My mouth and warn them for Me. 8 When I say to the wicked, ‘O wicked man, you shall surely die!’ and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. 9 Nevertheless if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.”

D. **9** Double-standard:

- (1) Those who use Matthew 7:1 to criticize those who would speak out against behaviors and attitudes plainly condemned by Scripture are doing exactly what they condemn.
- (2) They use the passage to “judge” that others should “judge not”!
- (3) To be consistent with their usage of the passage they should say nothing.
- (4) They are guilty of hypocrisy for using a double standard. Consistency thou art a jewel!

E. ****** Violates the immediate context of Matthew 7:1:

- (1) Jesus’ words cannot be lifted from their context without misusing them.
- (2) Immediately after saying “judge not” Jesus said, “Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine” (Matt. 7:6).
- (3) How can one identify a “dog” or a “hog” (spiritually) without making a judgment?
- (4) Later in the chapter Jesus says, “Beware of false prophets” (Matt. 7:15); how can one determine whether another is a “false prophet” without making a judgment?
- (5) So, Jesus only condemns certain types of “judging” (hypercritical, hypocritical, ensorious).

F. **10** The consequences of hypocritical, hypocritical, censorious judging: **Matt. 7:2:** “For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.”

- (1) I don’t think this is strictly applicable to God’s judgment of us (re-read v. 2).
 - (a) If we judge hypocritically, hypercritically, censorious judgments it is sinful.
 - (b) Surely, God would not judge us in a sinful way! Gen. 18:25; 2 Tim. 4:8
- (2) ****** I think it means this: If we are harsh, hypercritical and unfair in our judgments of others; won’t the tendency be for those so judged to judge us just as harshly?
- (3) It’s true that when we use such unrighteous judgments of others; God will not show us mercy; not because He is playing tit-for-tat; but because we are guilty of sin!

Jas. 2:13: “For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.”

Matt. 5:7: “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.”

(4) Brother John Smith describes the merciless, judgmental Christian:

“The fault-finder is negative and destructive. Mercilessly, he puts the worst possible construction on motives and is ungenerous toward the mistakes of others. His actions reveal a defect of heart. He demonstrates no love, and no mercy. He proves himself to be a child of Satan rather than a child of God.” (Smith, pp. 72-73)

- (5) When we don’t show others mercy; God isn’t dishing out “an eye-for-an-eye”; He withholds mercy because we are violating the scriptural principle of love:

1 Cor. 13:4-7: “Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; 6 does not

rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

- (6) A hypocritical, hypercritical, judgmental Christian is reaping what he has sown! Gal. 6:7-8

"Disciples are to judge as God judges. They are not to overlook the sin in others, but are to view them with compassion and love. It's not that someday I *might* need to show mercy. Someday I *will* need mercy. If God judged us as we often judge others, would we already be assigned to a Devil's hell?" (Smith, p. 73)

- G. **II** Jesus addresses the folly of hypocritical, hypocritical, censorious judging in Matthew 7:3-5.

- (1) Jesus presents a cartoonish picture of the folly of judgmentalism: picture

"This humorous, but pathetic scene shows the true nature of hypocritical, censorious judgment." (Smith, p. 73)

Matt. 7:3-5: *"And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? 4 Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? 5 Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."*

- (2) ****** The 'beam-eyed' brother's judgment "was not rendered for the good of the other man, but for the glory of self." (Smith, p. 73)

- (a) It is a dreadful character flaw to try to elevate oneself by tearing down others!

- (b) **BUT**, proper judging is required! "It is not wrong to remove a speck from another's eye. This is needful and helpful. But it should not be done without first looking at self and then, with humility and compassion, seeking to help the 'speck-eyed' brother." (Smith, p. 74)

- (3) ****** The keys to proper judging: proper judging involves using the...

- (a) Correct method:

- ☛ Correct standard:

Jn. 12:48: *"...the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day."*

Jn. 7:24: *"Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."*

- ☛ Weighs all the evidence:

Prov. 18:13: *"He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him."*

- ☛ Considers all sides:

Prov. 18:17: *"The first one to plead his cause seems right, until his neighbor comes and examines him."*

- (b) **12** Correct attitude:

- ☛ Humility:

Gal. 6:1: *"Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted."*

2 Tim. 2:25: *"in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, 26 and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will."*

- ☛ Compassion:

Jude 22-23: “And on some have compassion, making a distinction; 23 but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.”

Matt. 9:36: “But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.” Cf. Mk. 9:42ff

☛ Love:

Matt. 22:39-40: “And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

Jas. 5:19-20: “Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, 20 let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.”

“I am a sinner saved by the grace of God (no big sins and little sins; big sinners or little sinners). What right then do I have to be unmerciful in my judgment of others? Let’s not ignore one another’s faults. It is a terrible thing to allow sin to go uncorrected. But, let us determine to be charitable in our discernment of others.” (Smith, p. 74)

- (4) But, we are then obligated to remove the “speck” from our brother’s eye!
 - (a) What Jesus condemns in Matthew 7:1 is hypocritical judging; one who seeks to remove a “speck” from another’s eye without removing the “plank” in his own eye.
 - (b) Are we never to help our brother remove the “speck”?
 - (c) ** No, for verse 5 tells us to do that very thing! But only after removing the “plank” from our own eye (**Matt. 7:5:** “First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”).

12. **13** Jesus teaches on discretion:

Matt. 7:6: “Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.”

- A. ** To understand this verse we must not lift it out of context and treat it as an isolated statement.
- B. Matthew 7:6 must be interpreted in the context of Jesus’ discussion on judging.
- C. In vv. 1-5 Christ warns against being too harsh; in v. 6 Christ comments on the reception of our judgments. For example, when judging the sinfulness of homosexuality...
 - (1) ** No matter how correct we are in our judgment from a scriptural standpoint (Rom. 1:24-27; 1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Tim. 1:10).
 - (2) ** No matter how humble and compassionate we are in making such judgments.
 - (3) ** No matter how much love we show in trying to help the homosexual see their wretched condition.
 - (4) ** Most will not accept our help, they will reject us because they reject Jesus; they will turn on us like a pack of wild dogs, they will trample us like a herd of wild hogs!
 - (5) Such people have no concept of the value of the pearl of great price (Matt. 13:45-46); they are so spiritually gone that God has given “them up to vile passions” (Rom. 1:26; **cf. Gen. 19:9).
 - (6) “When a person decisively rejects God, we should shake the dust off our feet (10.14) and redirect our energy to those who are more receptive (21.17; Acts 13.44-51, 18.5-6; 1 Cor. 2.14-15; Tit. 3:10-11).” (Chumbley, p. 135)

- D. Regarding “righteous” judgments; what Jesus is telling us is that “Discretion is the better part of valor.”

****Psa. 141:5:** “Let the righteous strike me; it shall be a kindness. And let him rebuke me; it shall be as excellent oil; let my head not refuse it.”; cf. Prov. 9:8; 23:9; 1 Pet. 3:15

13. **14** Jesus teaches on prayer (again!):

Matt. 7:7-11: “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. 9 Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? 11 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!”

- A. ****** Most treat vv. 7-11 as simply another isolated lesson on prayer.

- (1) But again, we must keep it in context.
- (2) “Many have regarded it as a sort of blank cheque which anybody, no matter what his state of soul or manner of walk may be, can fill in just as he pleases, and he has pledged to honor it.” (Pink, p. 296)
- (3) Jesus has already made seemingly blanket statements that upon further examination were obviously qualified, for example:
 - (a) Jesus’ teaching on “oaths” (5:33-37) does not preclude all swearing (Paul in Rom. 1:9; God in Heb. 6:13).
 - (b) Jesus’ teaching on worry about food and clothing (6:25-33) does not preclude us from working (2 Thess. 3:10) or planning ahead (Prov. 6:6-8).
 - (c) So, Jesus is not saying God is obligated to give us anything and everything we pray for!

- B. Again, we have to look to the context of Jesus’ teaching here to understand the point He is making about prayer.

- (1) Consider all that Jesus requires in the Sermon up to this point!
- (2) “Such demands of holiness are beyond my feeble strength: yet the Lord *has* made them—what then am I to do?” (Pink, p. 295) **2 Cor. 2:16:** “...who is sufficient for these things?”
- (3) We need spiritual strength and spiritual wisdom to put Jesus’ teaching into practice.
- (4) “Divine assistance is imperative if we are to meet the Divine requirements.” (Pink, p. 296)

- C. Jesus has set a lofty standard for kingdom citizens.

- (1) We must control not only our actions, but also our thoughts and attitudes.
- (2) We must love our enemies, divorce ourselves from materialism, not be hypocritical or hypocritical in our judgment of others, yet still spread the gospel and live up to these lofty standards.
- (3) How can we possibly do all this?!
- (4) Matthew 7:7-11 gives us the answer: the strength we need is found in diligent prayer!

- D. Like trusting in God’s providence to give us the necessities of life (6:25-33), Jesus wants us to know we can trust God regarding His ability to answer our prayers regarding these things.

- (1) To emphasize His point, Jesus again uses an argument from the lesser to the greater.

“Since imperfect fathers do good things for their children, ‘how much more’ (*a fortiori*, 6.26) can a perfectly good [heavenly, cvt] Father be trusted to give what is best to His children?” (Chumbley, p. 136)

- (2) Jesus comparison of God to a human father shows God’s goodness in answering our prayers (vv. 9-11) because no right-thinking human father would react negatively to his child’s requests!
- (3) Jesus is also calling on us to be persistent in our prayers (cf. Lk. 18:1-8; **Jas. 1:6-8**: “*But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; 8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*.”; Mk. 2:3-5; Persistence! Jacob, Gen. 32:26).

“To ‘ask in faith’ requires that we lay hold of and plead before God one of His own promises: it is not an expectation that He will grant everything we may demand, but an assurance that He will bestow whatsoever He pledged to give. ‘If we ask anything according to His will [not our will, but His, as it is revealed in Holy Writ], He heareth us’ (1 John v, 14), and we only ask ‘according to His will’ when we ask in faith for these things He knows will be for our good.” (Pink, pp. 304-305)

“It is not promised that we shall receive what we anticipate or want, but what is best.” (Smith, p. 75)

14. **15** Jesus teaches the “Golden Rule”:

Matt. 7:12: “*Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.*”

- A. ** The “Golden Rule” is simply another way of stating: “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*” (Matt. 22:39)
- B. Jesus statement here appears in a discussion of God’s goodness. God desires only good for us and constantly works toward that end.

“Disciples, whose minds and lives are to reflect the characteristics of God, should treat other people as God has treated them. We have no right to expect God to answer our prayers with good things if we are not willing to treat others as we want God to treat us.” (Smith, p. 75)
- D. God grants us the great blessing of being a “*partaker of the divine nature*” (2 Pet. 1:4); but with great blessings come great responsibilities!
- E. **16** Many ‘rules’ for living have been advanced by the philosophies of men; but none can compare to that laid down by the Lord:
 - (1) Not “might makes right” (brutal and selfish, is the soil from which tyranny and oppression grow),
 - (2) Not “do unto others as they do unto you” (invites retaliation and revenge, cf. Rom. 12:17-21),
 - (3) Not “do nothing to others that they would not want others to do to them” (better, but falls short, it is selfish and only motivates one to withhold injury for personal gain).

“The rule of living advanced by Jesus is far superior to these three. It calls upon people to be active in their relationships, not passive; selfless, not selfish; and sacrificial, not vengeful. Oh, how the world would change if men would choose the Lord’s way rather than the world’s.” (Smith, p. 76)

“Matthew 7:12 presents a truly extraordinary statement of living. It demands that disciples start with themselves rather than with others. They should first ask, ‘What do I like? What pleases me? What helps me? What encourages me?’ After answering these types of questions, disciples are to deal with others, realizing that ‘they are just like me.’ This will then lead disciples to put themselves in the place of others. I do not say unkind things because I do not want others to say unkind things about me. I don’t want to hurt others because I do not want to be hurt. I want to be encouraged and built up, so I encourage and build up other people. I will reap what I sow.” (Smith, p. 76)

“The life of Christ outlines in this sermon can be summarized (‘therefore’) by a single word—love. This so-called ‘golden rule’ (‘always treat others as you would like them to treat you, NEB) is but another way of stating the command to love our neighbor as ourself (22.39). ...Christ’s sermon cannot be lived by doing nothing; in fact, ‘goodness which consists in doing nothing would be a contradiction of everything that Christian goodness means’ (Barclay, I, 280). And since this rule is but a call for love, it’s keeping is not contingent on how others treat us. Because love always takes the initiative (1 Jn. 4.10), the golden rule requires us to take the first step.” (Chumbley, p. 136)

III. CONCLUSION: 17

1. Lord willing, we’ll finish our study of the Sermon on the Mount in one final lesson.
2. Christ’s teaching here reverberates through the ages issuing the greatest and clearest challenge for us to examine our level of devotion to God and imitation of His character.
3. In this section of the sermon, Jesus warns us:
 - A. *“Judge not, that you be not judged.”?*
 - B. A blanket statement condemning all judging? No! There are many judgments we must make!
 - C. But, we always need to ask ourselves: Why am I judging? To help or hinder? To hurt or heal? Because of hate or out of love? **Jn. 7:24:** *“Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.”* (truth, objectivity, humility, compassion, love)
 - D. But, despite our good intentions, don’t be surprised when people reject what God has to offer and turn on you like a pack of mad dogs, or a herd of wild hogs!
4. Is what Jesus requires of us in the Sermon on the Mount hard? Yes! But, we can pray to God for the spiritual strength and wisdom to do it! Eph. 3:20
5. Finally, Jesus promotes the most radical philosophy imaginable regarding our treatment of others: **Matt. 7:12:** *“Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them...”*
 “What a tremendous difference this would make in marriages, families, schools, work places, and churches.” (Smith, p. 76)
6. Invitation (Matt. 11:28-30)

IV. REFERENCES:

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