

“Dogs & Hogs”

Matthew 7:6

Baxter T. Exum (#1022)
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Introduction:

Hopefully most of us here this morning would agree that Jesus had a reason for saying everything that He said and that every single word in the four gospel accounts has been put there for a reason. With this in mind, I would like for us to consider this morning a sermon request from one of our members concerning a difficult passage in **Matthew 7** that does not seem to very easily fit in with the surrounding verses. The verse is difficult, and yet we understand that most things worth knowing are often hard to learn at the beginning. We think about learning to drive. Other than drivers' ed at school, I basically had two lessons: One lesson with dad where I learned the basic idea of using a clutch and shifting the gears, and then (once I had recovered from that traumatic experience) one lesson with mom a few weeks later where I could practice without dad wincing every time I stalled the car. But there again—learning to drive stick might have been hard at the time, but it was so worth it, and perhaps we could say the same thing about the verse that we are about to study from **Matthew 7**.

It was actually during this past Wednesday's song service that I suddenly realized that this morning's lesson is based on a verse from the Sermon on the Mount, and that the Sermon on the Mount is our theme for camp this week. So, as much as I would like to say that this has been carefully planned for many months, it actually seems to have just happened this way. But the verse I would like for us to consider is **Matthew 7:6**. **»PPT»** In our pew Bibles, the Scripture is found on **page 1511**, and it comes right after one of the most well-known passages among haters of the Christian faith. In fact, the first verse of **Matthew 7** has probably been memorized by more atheists and God-haters than any other passage, because this verse are often thrown right back at us if we make any attempt to uphold any aspect of the Christian faith. We point out some kind of sin, and people who know nothing about the Bible will sometimes respond with the words of Christ, ***“Do not judge so that you will not be judged.”*** And so the verse is thrown at us as if Jesus condemned all forms of judging, as if Jesus had no standards whatsoever.

Of course, Jesus went on to say (starting in **verse 2**), ***“For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, 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." Jesus, then, is warning about the danger of ignoring our own sin while we go out and correct other people for what they are doing. And that's a whole other lesson, but it is at this point that we come to the verse for this morning's lesson—**verse 6**. In the middle of one of the most peaceful and loving sermons ever spoken, the Lord comes down with what seems to be a rather harsh statement, because in **Matthew 7:6**, the Lord says, ***"Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces."*** How judgmental! And so for some people, we come to what appears to be a contradiction. On one hand, Jesus tells us not to judge, and then He turns around almost immediately and starts referring to certain people as dogs and pigs! Since the point of this passage **»PPT»** is obviously not a lesson on how to survive a literal pig attack, I would like for us to study together what this verse really means, ***"Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces."***

I would like for us to start by looking at the great value of what we have in Christ, I'd like for us to then consider the character of those who Jesus warns us about here, and then I'd like for us to close by considering the danger of sharing Christ with those who have such an attitude.

I. But first of all, let us please consider THE GREAT VALUE OF WHAT WE HAVE IN CHRIST. **»PPT»**

Certainly this is one aspect of this passage that is often overlooked—the great value of what we have. We look at this verse and we see a negative statement—something we are told not to do—and yet let us never forget the positive. The Lord uses two very positive terms here, starting with what He refers to as being ***"holy."*** ***"Do not give what is HOLY to dogs."*** The word ***"holy"*** refers to something that is different, to something that has been set apart for some special reason, to something that is special. If you can imagine getting a brand new I-pod Touch, most of us would not even think about giving to our 3-year old little brother to play with. He would not appreciate it. He would not treat it as special.

To the Jews, this reference to that which is ***"holy"*** would have been an obvious reference to the sacrifices that were being carried out in the temple. The temple was holy, the priests were holy, their garments were holy, the utensils were holy, the altar was ***"most holy,"*** and certainly the sacrifices were also holy—all of these things were set apart, they were special, they were dedicated to God. And the offering, if it was ever eaten, was only to be eaten by the priests. The leftovers were to be completely burned with fire. And so the Jews who were living under the Law of Moses would have been horrified to even imagine one of those sacrifices being taken off of the altar and thrown to a dog. It would have been an unspeakable terrible sin against God.

And yet since Jesus is not talking here about a literal piece of meat, please think with me for a moment about what is described as being ***"holy"*** under the New Covenant.

In **Acts 3:14**, the apostle Peter was speaking to the Jewish people as he accused them of having, *“...disowned the Holy and Righteous One.”* As our perfect sacrifice, the Lord is holy, and really, everything associated with the Lord is holy as well. As Christians, we are holy. The Scriptures are holy. The message about Christ is holy. All of these things have been set apart and are special to the Lord. Let us appreciate what we have!

And then in a parallel reference, Jesus also mentions *“pearls.”* ***“Do not throw your PEARLS before swine.”*** Most of us know that pearls come from oysters through a long natural process, and we know that pearls are valuable. But again, Jesus is not really talking about pearls. In fact, just a few chapters later, Jesus will go on to tell a parable about the Pearl of Great Price. In **Matthew 13:45-46**, Jesus said, ***“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.”*** A pearl, then, is extremely valuable, and Jesus uses the pearl as a tool to illustrate the great value of the gospel message.

And so we go back to **Matthew 7:6**. We have something that is *“holy,”* and we have a reference to some valuable *“pearls.”* Without getting too specific, we combine these two ideas, and we are reminded that what we have as Christians is incredibly valuable. We remember the words of Peter in **1 Peter 1:18-19**. Peter basically told them to behave, ***“...knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.”*** Let us then appreciate this gospel message—the value of what we have in Christ!

II. So we have some very positive words—we have a sermon about lilies of the field, and sparrows, and blessings—some of the most loving and beautiful words ever spoken, and now suddenly into this beautiful sermon we have these shocking words as the Lord refers to THE CHARACTER OF THOSE WHO SCORN THE THINGS OF CHRIST, and HE REFERS TO THESE PEOPLE AS DOGS AND SWINE. ▶PPT▶

And this is not unusual. You might remember that the Lord once referred to wicked King Herod as a *“fox.”* He referred to the scribes and Pharisees as a *“brood of vipers.”* These are some strong words, and they are words to teach a lesson—a lesson that people can sometimes act like animals. As Christians, then, we need to see this—we need to be able to discern between those who will appreciate holy things and those who will tear us to pieces.

As we try to learn the difference, let us look first at the dogs. These are not cute little Chihuahuas. These are not Goldendoodles. These are not family pets. But these dogs the Lord is talking about here are wild animals—more like wolves or coyotes—savage, ugly dogs—dogs that would rip things to pieces—scavengers, feeding on garbage—greedy, shameless—prowling the streets at night—threatening little children. These are the dogs that would eat our dogs today. These are the dogs

that ate Queen Jezebel and left nothing but her skull, and her feet, and the palms of her hands.

And even among the dogs we have as pets today (as domesticated as they are), many of them still do not discriminate. If it can be swallowed, they will eat it—whether it is a nice juicy steak or a dead squirrel on the side of the road—it does not matter. Years ago, we helped a family move, and they had a huge hound dog. The teenager in the home pulled me aside and said, **“Watch this.”** He took a jelly doughnut off the kitchen counter, and when the dog wasn’t looking, this guy chucked the doughnut across the room in the general direction of the dog, and it was almost like watching it in slow motion—the dog sees something flying through the air, this huge fat dog then leaps up and swallows it whole—midair—no chewing, just a gulp! It could have been a steak or a grenade—whatever was flying through the air, this dog was going to eat it. And probably all of us can tell similar stories. Not long after we were married, we ended up cat-sitting (you can ask my sister why we had to do that), but I remember eating dinner one night and smelling something just terrible. Our beagle came out of the cat room with cat litter in her whiskers. I will let you imagine the rest, but the point is: Dogs have no discernment, and if given something holy (if given a holy offering directly off the altar from the temple in Jerusalem) they will eat it—no questions asked! They do not care whether their next meal comes from the altar or from the garbage can. And so let us not be surprised when a dog acts like a dog!

In a spiritual sense, the Bible sometimes uses the term **“dog”** to refer to the Gentiles. Over in the New Testament, Paul even used the term to refer to fellow Jews—the **“evil workers,”** those who worked against the spread of the gospel—evil men who had no discernment. So, this is the character of the people we are talking about this morning—they have no appreciation for things that are holy, for things that are valuable.

For an example of a dog with no discernment for things that are holy, we only need to look back to the book of Daniel. Several months ago, we studied the feast in **Daniel 5** and the handwriting on the wall. Do you remember what they were doing at that feast? In his drunkenness, the king had called for the sacred vessels that had been taken from the temple in Jerusalem in 586 BC. The king and his friends were drinking wine out of those sacred vessels. It is no wonder that God sent a message that night, **“Numbered, Numbered, Weighed, Divided.”** At that very hour, Belshazzar’s kingdom was given over to the Medes and Persians. God has a special place in His heart for those with no discretion.

And then we get to the swine. And here again, the swine in this verse are not the three little piggies who built the houses out of straw, wood and brick. This is not Miss Piggy we are talking about here this morning. But we are talking about wild animals—feral pigs or wild boars—savage creatures. Under the Old Law, swine were unclean animals. They were not to be eaten. Just from a health point of view, we know why. Pigs carry all kinds of diseases—trichinosis, swine flu, whatever. They are nasty animals, and they are messy.

Some of you know that my grandfather used to preach in Lynchburg, Tennessee—home of the Jack Daniels' distillery. Whenever we would visit, we would go on walks on those narrow roads out in the country. I very clearly remember those huge trucks carrying the slop (the leftovers) from the distillery. Those tanker trucks would then take that nastiness (the leftovers from making whiskey), and they would drop it off at the pig farms. And the pigs loved it. We could hardly breathe when the trucks went by, but the pigs just loved it—no discretion, no discernment! To a pig, a pearl is less valuable than the slop bucket we had up here last week, and so when given a choice, a pig would choose the bucket. The pig would rather have those old mango peelings.

You know, as far as I can tell, there is only one other verse in the entire Bible where pigs and dogs are mentioned together in the same verse—**2 Peter 2:21-22**—a reference to false teachers who have turned away from the gospel, ***“For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them. It has happened to them according to the true proverb, ‘A DOG RETURNS TO ITS OWN VOMIT,’ and, ‘A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire.’”*** That is one of the grossest verses in the whole Bible! But you know that if your dog pukes, you'd better go grab his collar and get him out of there, because he is going in for seconds! And in the same way, a pig has no discernment—a second after getting all clean, that animal will jump right back into it.

III. We have the value of what we have in Christ, we have the character of those who do not care what we have, and now we discover WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THESE TWO THINGS COME TOGETHER—THE DANGER OF SHARING THE LORD WITH THOSE WHO SCORN. **▶PPT▶**

Jesus paints a dramatic picture of someone perhaps surrounded by a pack of dogs or maybe surrounded by wild pigs out in the wilderness somewhere. The person throws down his or her most valuable possessions, and the dogs and pigs do not care; but instead, they turn and tear the person to pieces. The animals are looking for food, but all they find are these inedible little chunks, and so they turn on the person and attack.

As we think about this in a spiritual sense, we understand that there are some people who do not appreciate spiritual things, but even beyond that, they are hostile to the Christian faith. The Lord, then, is warning us that we are to be extremely careful, that we are to exercise discretion, and there are times when it is wise simply to be quiet. In my own personal experience, I can think of several situations where we have run into those who basically hate anything religious. Years ago, I was going door-to-door with one of the teenagers from Janesville, we put a flyer on a man's door, and a block later we started hearing someone yelling, **“Hey you! Hey you!”** He finally caught up to us, he threw the flyer down on the ground as he angrily yelled, **“Get this trash off my door!”** Face red, veins bulging in his neck—this man was a dog, this man was a wild pig. There was nothing we could have said to calm him down. In fact, anything we could have said probably would have made him get even angrier. We politely picked up the flyer and kept moving. I made a mental

note of that address. I still know that address—I could tell it to you right now if I wanted to. But I clearly remember that just a month or two later, a teenager was arrested for tackling and stealing a purse from a 90-something year old woman in the Wal-Mart parking lot. As I was reading the newspaper article, the address of the teenage punk jumped right off the page at me—the teenager lived at the same address where this middle-aged God-hater also lived. It was the same address. At that point I understood at least a tiny bit of what was going on in that home. Dogs were being raised by dogs.

We think back to Solomon's warning in **Proverbs 9:7-8**, ***"He who corrects a scoffer gets dishonor for himself, and he who reproveth a wicked man gets insults for himself. Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you, reprove a wise man and he will love you."*** Now certainly we hate to give up on people, and yet please remember what Jesus told His disciples as He sent them out in **Mark 6:11**. He said, ***"Any place that does not receive you or listen to you, as you go out from there, shake the dust off the soles of your feet for a testimony against them."***

As Christians, we have been told to, ***"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation"*** (**Mark 16:15**). And yet at the same time we also need to be smart about it. Life is too short, and the world is too large to waste time on those who hate the Christian faith. To give what is holy to dogs will only damage that which is holy, and to give what is valuable to pigs will only ruin what is valuable, and we may also get injured or damaged in the process.

As an example of how to deal with different kinds of people, we can think about the Lord's trial and the different ways that Jesus spoke with Pilate and Herod. As the Lord stood before Pilate, Pilate asked what appear to be some pretty sincere questions, and Jesus answered those questions. Pilate concluded that Jesus was an innocent man. But Herod was different. Herod had no interest in the truth. Herod only wanted to see Jesus do some miracles. Herod was king over the Jewish people, but Herod had no idea who it was who was standing before him. Herod did not care. And when King Herod questioned the Lord, the Lord said nothing. As one preacher has said, ***"You answer the questions of a Pilate, but you say nothing to a Herod."***

We also find an illustration of this principle in the life of Paul. As Paul and Barnabas tried to preach the gospel in Antioch, the Jewish people opposed them at every opportunity. In fact, it got to the point where Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said to them (in **Acts 13:46**), ***"It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles."*** And then a few verses later, ***"But the Jews incited 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."*** Paul and Barnabas knew that they were dealing with dogs and hogs, and so they moved on.

Paul would go on to lay it out for Titus, a gospel preacher on the island of Crete, ***“But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. Reject a factious man after a first and second warning, knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned.”*** Paul was saying that you can make a judgment—it is not worth arguing with some people. You cannot reason with a dog or a pig without getting dragged down yourself—turn away from those people. There are some people who would rather argue than eat.

Perhaps some of you have logged on to some kind of religious chat room on the Internet. I have done it a time or two, but every time the discussion seems to deteriorate almost immediately into some kind of argument. And so almost immediately there are two sides of almost every issue—two sides that are dug in and will not budge, and no real good is accomplished. For such people who are only interested in arguing, it seems to me that Jesus is saying, **“Skip it. Do not throw your pearls before swine.”**

As one gospel preacher has said, **“One should refuse to accommodate the argumentative person who would dispute a sign he painted himself.”** Some people are like that—leave them alone! God did not put us here to win arguments, He did not put us here to get in fights with people, but He put us here to teach the good news. For your own good and for the sake of the gospel, make a judgment call and move on to those who are interested.

Conclusion:

»PPT» As we come to the end of our study of this one verse from the Sermon on the Mount, let us remember that this warning does not allow us to be mean to people. This warning does not allow us to just ignore people. This warning does not give us an excuse not to pass along the good news. This warning does not mean that we should ever quit praying for someone. This warning does not mean that we should ever quit caring—even Jesus wept over the Jerusalem that rejected Him. This warning does not mean that people can never change. Even the apostle Paul eventually came around.

But this verse is simply reminding us that in a hostile world, we are ambassadors of a priceless message, and we need to be discerning in how we pass it along. There are some dogs and swine out there who would love to rip us to pieces. They will not appreciate the message, and they will trample us in the process.

Here at the end, let us make really sure that we are not the ones acting like dogs and pigs. Let us appreciate the value of what we have in Christ, let us treat the word of God with respect and reverence, and let us be wise in sharing it with others.

The Bible teaches that God sent His only Son as a sacrifice for our sins. We respond to that sacrifice in faith. We turn away from sin, we confess the name of Jesus as being God’s Son, and we allow ourselves to be immersed in water for the forgiveness of our sins. If you have any questions or if you have something we need to pray

about as a congregation, we hope you will write it down and bring it to the front. On the other hand, if you know you are ready to obey the gospel right now, you can let us know about that as we sing this next song. Let's stand and sing...

To comment on this lesson: church@fourlakescoc.org