

SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR SUNDAY – NOVEMBER 5, 2023 @ CAPC OAKLAND

Matthew 7:1-12

NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION UPDATED EDITION

[Jesus continued teaching saying,]

¹ “Do not *judge*, so that you may not be *judged*. ² For the *judgment* you give will be the *judgment* you get, and the *measure* you give will be the *measure* you get. ³ Why do you see the speck in your neighbor’s eye but do not notice the log in your own eye? ⁴ Or how can you say to your neighbor, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ while the log is in your own eye? ⁵ You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor’s eye.

⁶ “Do not give WHAT IS HOLY to dogs, and do not throw your PEARLS before SWINE, or they will trample them under foot and turn and maul you.

⁷ “**Ask**, and it will be given to you; **search**, and you will find; **knock**, and the door will be opened for you. ⁸ For everyone who asks **receives**, and everyone who searches **finds**, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. ⁹ Is there anyone among you who, if your child asked for bread, would give a stone? ¹⁰ Or if the child asked for a fish, would give a snake? ¹¹ If you, then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

¹² “In everything **do to others as you would have them do to you**, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

Matthew is one of four gospels – telling the story of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth and his teachings. Matthew is the only one of the four to include the larger sermon on the mount (Chapters 5 to 7) with which we’re wrestling this fall. The context of the Sermon on the Mount is radically important, without it the teachings can seem like disparate moral teachings, as opposed to a radical reinterpretation and recreation of the world.

Jesus has invited everyone to “repent. Change the Way they live. Because the kingdom of heaven is here.” Those that respond in chapter 4 are fisherman, the sick, the broken, the marginalized - those who are overlooked and unimportant in the Roman Empire and the way of the World – but blessed and included in the Kingdom of Heaven. Their lives matter despite what the world says. For Jesus tells them that they are the light of the world and the salt of the earth – demonstrating God’s radical love and breaking-into-the-world-reign through their actions. The sermon focuses on raising up this alternative community, that lives for a different empire – the lifestyle of the kingdom of God – in contrast to Rome’s empire.

judge :: Notice that this word is repeated 4 times in just 2 verses. κρίνω pronounced "krinó" to judge, decide, separate, distinguish, think, consider, propose, dispute, bring to trial. Jesus in the sermon judges people: synagogue practice represent hypocrisy (6:2, 5); Gentiles don't know how to pray (6:7) and are inappropriately focused on material goods (6:32). Is there a contradiction or something else going on? "Throughout the sermon and the gospel, the disciples and the audience are being trained to discern practices appropriate to God's reign." "The four uses of the word κρίνω suggest eschatological judgment. Disciples must not usurp God's role and decide someone's future destiny. Such writing someone off is prohibited because it lacks mercy or compassion (see 5:7, 22) and also being only the all-seeing and ill-knowing God can exercise that role." This is a "community of disciples as a community of the imperfect, of those who journey on the way to life. It's a community in which every member trusts himself or herself to God's mercy." A better translation might be "Do not condemn..." Or "Do not play God..."

the measure:: this refers to what we might call a measuring cup, the measure used to serve, distribute, and give out materials... like grain, milk, meat. If you cheated in how you measured out your goods as a market person, you could expect to be cheated in turn. There is something about correction of behavior which follows self-examination which is shaped by the presence of future of God’s reign/kingdom.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & EXAMEN:

- What engaged you, enraged you, or surprised you in these texts?

- What do you find most challenging in this part of the teaching? The bit about judgement of others?; self-examination as key to holy living?; praying, or living a prayer-full life trusting that God is already giving and responding? Trusting that God wants good for us?

- Jesus says that we are to show mercy to others (another way of saying love) as God has shown, and show us mercy. Whom do you find it difficult to give mercy and grace? Why is that? Who has shown you mercy in life? How did their merciful love shape and change you?

- How is the kingdom of God of which Jesus talks, different than the empire of Rome – of the kingdom of our world? How does that encourage you in your daily life? How might that discourage you in how we live together as a church community, rooted in this kingdom vision of an alternative way of being together?

- What invitation do you hear the Spirit of God speaking to you – *or to us, as a church* – to act, speak, be, or change, through this word of scripture?

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

WHAT IS HOLY... PEARLS:: things of great value. “the holy” comes from passages such as Exodus 29:33 and Leviticus 2:3 which refer to sacrificial offerings set apart for divine service. (שְׁדֵק pronounced “kodesh” means holy – in simpler terms, means to be set apart for a specific purpose).

DOG | SWINE :: both animals are seen as negative, unclean, unwanted.

Ask, ... search, ... knock... :: “these are words that portray the act of prayer, and also language that describe a lifestyle of focusing on and doing God’s purposes.”

Receives... finds...:: “the present tense for **receives** and **finds** indicates God’s ongoing response. The two verses offer encouragement and assurance that the difficult quest for, and focus on, god’s will, even in circumstances of hostility and/or competing claims, will not meet with disappointment.”

who are evil:: this points to the notion of “the evil of earth’s inhabitants who refuse to do God’s will.” It’s been quite present throughout the sermon. See 5:11 “*Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.*” The disciples of the way of Jesus are to resist this evil by praying for deliverance from it (“And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.” 6:13) and seeking God’s kingdom/empire constantly. (But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” 6:33)

do to others as you would have them do to you, this teaching, which appears in the Hebrew Scriptures (Leviticus 19:18 – “*You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.*”) and also in similar form in ancient Greek philosophy is here shaped in large part by its connection to ~~the Law and the Prophets~~:: This points back to the last time this expression was used – in the beginning of the sermon Matthew 5:17 “[Jesus said] ‘*Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill.*’” Jesus in the sermon on the Mount has offered examples of the ‘better justice/righteousness.’ of 5:20 as it points to the type of lifestyle created by God’s empire. While similar sayings, Jesus’ teaching is tied directly to the larger context of what it means to be “*Blessed as poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*” (5:3)

Notes taken from Warren Carter, *Matthew and the Margins. A sociopolitical and Religious Reading.* pp 180-185