

Sermon on the Mount: Jesus' Challenge to Authentic Discipleship – Week Fourteen

Healthy Relationships in a Fallen World

Matthew 7:1-6

Introduction: As we pursue discipleship in this fallen world, Jesus commands us to “be wise as serpents and innocent as doves” (Mt. 10:16). In other words, live skillfully in this present world, but maintain the integrity of the world to come. Jesus addresses this same idea when he speaks of relating to people in the context of this fallen world. We need wise and healthy relationships toward both Christians and non-Christians.

1. RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHRISTIANS – Do not judge! Matthew 7:1-2

- A. What is the context for this command?
 - 1. Jesus has been advocating radical discipleship. Some might judge those who fall short.
 - 2. This is always a problem in the body of Christ.
- B. What does this command does not mean...
 - 1. It doesn't mean accepting all behavior uncritically
 - 2. For example: Matt. 7:15-20; John 7:24; 1 Cor. 5:5; Gal.1:8-9; 6:1; Phil. 3:2; 1 John 4:1
 - 3. It doesn't mean that leaders in official positions of authority can't make judgments.
- C. What the command does mean...
 - 1. It refers to a criticizing culture or an attitude in you personally or your organization.
 - 2. That culture could be called a moralizing legalism.
- D. Jesus gives three reasons to not judge.
 - 1. You invite more rigorous examination from God and people. 7:1-2
 - 2. You won't be able to see yourself clearly. 7:3-4
 - 3. You will perpetuate a cycle of hypocrisy. 7:5

2. RELATIONSHIPS WITH NON-CHRISTIANS – Do evaluate! We must wisely anticipate how others are responding to our faith. Matthew 7:6

- A. Notice – Jesus uses a literary style here that urges caution.
- B. Problem – We are going to encounter people who are “dogs” and “swine.”
 - 1. This is not a reference to their essential personhood.
 - 2. It is a reference to their response to faith.
- C. Command – Jesus tells us not to throw “what is holy” or “pearls” before them.
 - 1. What is holy and pearls refers to the truths about the Christian faith.
 - 2. Throwing them means communicating them in an unwise way.
 - 3. Principle: the further a culture is from Christ, the more hostile (Katy Perry Vanity Fair).
 - 4. Problem: Sometimes evangelicals have done hit and run evangelism. Not missional!
- D. Outcome – Jesus predicts the bad outcome of inappropriate communication.
 - 1. The truth gets trampled under their feet.
 - 2. You get torn to pieces with criticism.
- E. Remember – We must interpret this in light of grace and truth. John 1:14
 - 1. Feel people out through wise conversation and service. Col. 4:5-6
 - 2. Love people even if they are “dogs & swine.”

3. RELATIONSHIPS WITH ALL – We must accept reality in a fallen world.

- A. Many Christians fall into an unbiblical idealism and utopianism.
 - 1. Some is fueled by the Marxist ethos.
 - 2. Some is fueled by Christian romanticism. “*Wouldn't it be nice if...*”
- B. Reality is that this life is imperfect. Its' going to be tough. And we're called to be wise.