

LIFE FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE

Today in our lesson from the hillside our Lord takes our Christianity to a new level. It is a level that has everything to do with relationships. If our Christianity doesn't work with others, it doesn't work. When the Psalmist says, "...lead me to the rock that is higher than I" (Psalm 61:2b), he is asking the Lord to lift him up so he can see things from God's viewpoint. We would all benefit from seeing things from God's perspective.

I. The Problem of Judgment

Matthew 7:1-6. In this passage God is not saying not to judge, otherwise we would not find passages of Scripture such as John 7:24, "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment." Even in our courts of law, which are taken from the law of Moses, we are commanded thusly: "And I charged your judges at that time, saying, Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him" (Deuteronomy 1:16). Without judgment we would live in abject anarchy. Lawlessness would abound and no one would be safe. Even within the perimeters of the local church we are to call-out a brother or sister in Christ that is walking disorderly: "For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?" (I Corinthians 5:12). And to avoid judgment from one another, we are commanded to first judge ourselves as seen in II Corinthians 13:5a: "Examine yourselves..." and I Corinthians 11:28a: "But let a man examine himself..." I Peter 4:17 says, "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?"

The problem of which our Lord is speaking in our text is graphically illustrated by Him in Matthew 23:25-28: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." The judgment of the Pharisees is that

they judged by appearances, not the condition of the heart. And in their judgmental attitudes, they became hateful.

A. A Deadly Boomerang

Matthew 7:1, 2. Originally the boomerang was used as an Australian hunting club that can be thrown, but will return to you again. The definition has branched into meaning something that does injury to the originator, or in other words, to backfire. Our Lord is warning that if we judge like the Pharisees, it is reflective that there are spiritual flaws in our character and as we begin to judge others, we are setting up ourselves to the same scrutiny that will come back on us with a vengeance.

B. A Distorted Vision

Matthew 7:3-5. If you have ever wondered if the Lord Jesus had a sense of humor while on this earth, wonder no more. This brief passage proves His sense of humor. If we were to use modern English, we would say, "Why do you keep being bothered by the toothpick in your brother's eye when you have a two-by-four stuck in your own eye. You hypocrite! Get rid of the piece of lumber in your own eye before you go around trying to pull out the small splinter out of your brother's eye." On the serious note, our Lord, with His sarcasm, was saying, if we have a beam in our eye, we will have a problem ministering to other people about the mote in theirs. First of all, we will have a problem of seeing clearly due to the large obstruction. Secondly, we will have a problem of mobility, unable to negotiate with a huge beam in the way. Finally, we will hurt the brother with the mote in his eye, because we cannot execute the extraction with the larger problem in our own eye.

C. A Diminished Discernment

Matthew 7:6. These are strong words. The Lord was forbidding giving great truths to the hogs and dogs of this world. To the Jews, these were unclean animals. Jesus was pointing out that the spiritual person is to persuade the person that is open and available to receive God's Word. Then He says, "And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city" (Mark 6:10). We all need to be right with the Lord in order to have discernment. I John 4:1: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." Philipians 1:9,10: "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ."

II. The Promise of Prayer

Matthew 7:7-11. This has to be one of the greatest prayer passages in the Scripture. If the average Christian would take these words of Jesus more seriously, his or her prayer life would be revolutionized.

A. Praying to Appeal

Matthew 7:7 “Ask!” James said, “...Ye have not, because ye ask not” (James 4:2c). There is great assurance and joy when we pray according to God’s will. Philippians 1:4: “Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy.” I John 5:14: “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.”

B. Praying to Reveal

Matthew 7:7 “Seek!” David said to Solomon, in I Chronicles 28:9c, “...If thou seek Him, he will be found of thee....” Isaiah 55:6 says, “Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.” This word connotes a desire to have God’s will revealed. And God wants to reveal His will to us more than we want to discover His will for our lives. So God commands us to seek Him!

C. Praying with Zeal

Matthew 7:7 “Knock!” This tells us the request has become more demanding. You have found the door and now you are knocking. You are commanded to “come boldly unto the throne of grace” in Hebrews 4:16. The basis of our prayer is relationship as shown to us in Matthew 7:9-11. As evil as we are, all of us can understand a parent willing to give their very best to the obedient requesting child.

III. The Purpose of Being Nice

A. The Blessing to Receive

Matthew 7:12a “...Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you...” Everyone would like others to be nice to them.

B. The Blessing to be Given

Matthew 7:12b “...Do ye even so to them...” We are to treat others the way we want to be treated.

C. The Blessing Divinely Defined

Matthew 7:12c “...For this is the law and the prophets.” Jesus is introducing to us what is commonly known as the Golden Rule. Another biblical name for the golden rule is “the Royal Law.” James 2:8 teaches us, “If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well.”

Other religions have tried to re-state the Golden or Royal Law; Confucianism says, “Do not do to others what you do not want them to do to you” (Analects 15:23).

Hinduism says, "This is the sum of duty: do not do to others what would cause pain if done to you" (Mahabharata 5:1517). Buddhism says, "Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful" (Udanavarga 5:18). Some have argued that some of these religions pre-date the New Testament; therefore Christ was borrowing from them. Not so! For Leviticus 19:18 pre-dates all the other religions, "Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD." The Golden Rule is woven into the warp and woof of the Judeo-Christian ethic. At very best, the other religions attempt to define the royal law as what has been described as the "silver rule" because their attempts are negative and rely on passivity, telling you what you could or should not do, in other words, refrain from doing. In God's word He gives the "gold standard or rule" telling us what not only we should not do, but what we should and could do through Christ.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.