Matthew 7B

- Chapter 7 of Matthew contains a number of iconic sayings of Jesus
    - You've probably heard most of them before and may have even used some yourself at times
        - Phrases like "walking the straight and narrow"
        - "Wolf in sheep's clothing"
        - "Know a tree by its fruit"
        - "A house built on sand," etc….all of these are found in chapter 7
    - Last week we looked at another frequently quoted phrase, probably the most quoted in this chapter and perhaps in all the Bible
        - The phrase was "Do not judge"
        - Jesus told His followers not to put ourselves in the place of God by judging each another's righteousness
- And as we learned last week, judging in this way is wrong because all Christians all equally righteous before God *and* equally sinful to each other
    - First, we are all equally righteous before God, because we have all been credited with Christ's perfect life by our faith in Him
        - Our heavenly accounts say "Fully Righteous" and so our standing before God is equal
        - Therefore, none of us are anymore righteous than anyone else in the body of Christ, not in eternal terms
    - And then secondly, all Christians are also equally sinful in our walk on this earth
        - We all occupy a 100% sinful body, so we each commit sin daily in our thoughts, words and actions
        - One of us may commit *different* sins than another, and perhaps some may commit *more* sin on a given day than others
        - But those differences are meaningless when judging who is more sinful because even just one sin is enough to put us in the fiery Hell, Jesus says

© 2018 – Verse By Verse Ministry International (www.versebyverseministry.org)
May be copied and distributed provided the document is reproduced in its entirety, including this copyright statement, and no fee is collected for its distribution.

- Glory be to God that Jesus reconciled us to God, taking the penalty for our sins upon Himself so that we would not be condemned

- Therefore, judging someone in the body of Christ accomplishes nothing except undermining our unity

- And rather than being preoccupied with another believer's sin, Jesus said we should contend with our own sin first

- So that as we model obedience in our own lives, we will may be an example to other believers who wrestle with their sin

- We can be a source of encouragement, compassion, insight and inspiration to them

- In short, don't judge one another, set examples for one another

- Jesus' teaching on judging opens a chapter dedicated to teaching His disciples how to live out righteousness in an unrighteous world

- We remember Jesus said we are to be salt and light in the world

- But now He's explaining that the world won't be interested in seeing our light, not at first

- Scripture teaches that the world is filled with men and women and even spiritual forces that oppose the cause of righteousness

- The world isn't just *disinterested* in the Gospel…

- The Bible says the Gospel *offends* the world because it convicts them of sin, causing them to hate the Gospel and those who deliver it

John 3:19 "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.
John 3:20 "For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

- And therefore, Jesus wants us to be discerning as we go about our work

- First, we should understand that attacks will come against the church

- The enemy will try to undermine the unity of the body by tempting us into self-righteousness and judgmental attitudes toward one another

© 2018 – Verse By Verse Ministry International (www.versebyverseministry.org)
May be copied and distributed provided the document is reproduced in its entirety, including this copyright statement, and no fee is collected for its distribution.

- The enemy successfully fostered than culture within Israel and He certainly wants to do the same within the Church

- Which is why Jesus told us last week not to judge but accept one another even as we work together to address our sin

- Which brings us now to Jesus' second point of preparation for His disciples found in v.6 concerning judging the unbelieving world

Matt. 7:6 "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.

- Obviously, here we find another often-quoted phrase of Jesus, throwing pearls before swine

  - Only Matthew's Gospel records this saying of Jesus, so we don't have a cross reference from another Gospel

  - And perhaps that's explains why this phrase is so poorly understood

- It's easy to hear it frequently misinterpreted as a warning not to share the Gospel with those who would reject it

  - The interpretations says something to the effect that we shouldn't offer the Gospel to those who won't receive it

  - That when we try too hard to present the Gospel, we risk shaming Christ or the Gospel itself

  - So if an unbeliever rejects our message, move on, don't throws your pearls before swine…etc.

- While that may seem sensible, there are a lot of things wrong with that interpretation, and I think it's worth a moment to show you why

- First, notice the context of Jesus' illustration

  - It comes immediate after Jesus talking about believers not judging one another in the church

  - And it comes immediately before teaching on trusting God to do what's best for us when we seek His help

- Furthermore, notice in v.12 Jesus gives a summary of the prior 11 verses of the chapter

© 2018 – Verse By Verse Ministry International (www.versebyverseministry.org)
May be copied and distributed provided the document is reproduced in its entirety, including this copyright statement, and no fee is collected for its distribution.

- Jesus summarizes this entire section saying treat everyone the same way you want to be treated
- Don't be judges of others…trust God to give each person what is best for them…treat others the way you want to be treated…
- Inserting a teaching to not share the Gospel with those who resist it simply doesn't fit in that line of thought at all

- Secondly, such an interpretation doesn't fit the details of the illustration
  - In the illustration, Jesus says don't throw pearls to swine
    - He isn't talking about withdrawing an offer after it's been rejected
    - He's saying never offer holy things in the first place
  - Elsewhere Jesus *does* tell His disciples that if the Gospel has been soundly rejected, we are to move on

Luke 9:5 **"And as for those who do not receive you, as you go out from that city, shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them."**

- But notice the difference between these two passages of Scripture
- In Luke 9, Jesus was explaining what to do *after* we have *already* presented the Gospel and it's been rejected
- But in Matthew 7, Jesus insists we *never* giving holy things to those unfit to receive them
- That's a different point than the one being made in Luke 9

  - Moreover, how could we know who might receive the Gospel until we first offer it to them?
    - We have to throw our pearls to find out who the "swine" truly are, so to speak
    - It's only after someone has rejected the Gospel that we discover they aren't inclined to receive it

- Finally, and most importantly, interpreting Matthew 7:6 to mean we shouldn't offer the Gospel to those who reject it run contrary to the rest of the Bible

© 2018 – Verse By Verse Ministry International (www.versebyverseministry.org)
May be copied and distributed provided the document is reproduced in its entirety, including this copyright statement, and no fee is collected for its distribution.

- First, the Bible says *everyone* is opposed to the Gospel…until they receive it
    - There is no one who wants to hear our message, but by the power of God some receive it
    - So if we only offered the Gospel to those who were inclined to receive it, we would never offer it to anyone
- Secondly, the Bible commands us to present the Gospel to everyone indiscriminately, like seed being thrown on the ground in Luke 8
    - Some will reject it out of hand
    - Some will seem to accepted it, though they never truly did
    - Some will accept it without living up to its demands
    - Some will accept it and truly live it out
    - So we are called to share the Gospel with everyone without exception
- Finally, Jesus Himself commonly offered the Kingdom to those who opposed Him and His message
    - In fact, the entire nation of Israel opposed Jesus so much, they killed Him over the Gospel!
    - Therefore, if Jesus were telling us not to offer the Gospel to those who might reject it, He violated His own teaching!
- Clearly, Jesus must be talking about something different in this passage
    - The context of the chapter, the details of His illustration, and the teaching of Scripture overall…all argue for a different interpretation
    - So what is the holy thing we should never offer to those who would reject it?

- So let's begin with some basic observations of what Jesus did say
    - Jesus begins saying don't give holy things to dogs
        - On the one hand, holy things are pure, precious, undefiled, and worthy of honor
        - While dogs sit on the other end of the spectrum

© 2018 – Verse By Verse Ministry International (www.versebyverseministry.org)
May be copied and distributed provided the document is reproduced in its entirety, including this copyright statement, and no fee is collected for its distribution.

- Now todays we see dogs as cute, domesticated pets (except poodles which are justifiably detested by all)
    - But in Israel dogs were wild animals, unclean, dangerous and despised, the most detestable things imaginable
    - That's why Jews called Gentiles "dogs" because this was the worst insult they could offer
- So Jesus says don't take holy, precious things worthy of honor and offer them to violent brutes that would only destroy and dishonor them
    - Then He expands on this idea using a second contrast of pearls vs. swine
    - Once again, pearls are valuable, precious things that make the one who wears them appear more beautiful
    - On the other hand, pigs were the most unclean animal in Jewish culture, and like dogs they were wild and dangerous creatures

- In addition, swine are utterly incapable of appreciating the value of pearls
    - If you strung pearls around a pig's neck, the pig would barely notice them, must less understand how precious they were
        - And pearls don't enhance a pig's appearance
        - You could string a thousand pearls around a pig's neck, and it wouldn't be the least bit more attractive to the other pigs
        - So if a pig can't eat it, mate with them, fight it or sleep on it, they have no interest in it (like most college frat boys)
        - So in the end, your pearls would just go unnoticed and be trampled under foot in the mud, doing no one any good
    - Finally, Jesus adds that if we were so foolish as to offer holy things to dogs or pigs, we stand to lose more than just our pearls
        - If you approach a wild pack of dogs or pigs, the animals will feel threatened and strike out at you
        - And wild dogs and wild pigs can easily kill a human being, tearing a person to pieces, as Jesus says
        - So giving holy things to these brutes has zero chance of gaining a benefit and it comes with a high probability of personal harm

© 2018 – Verse By Verse Ministry International (www.versebyverseministry.org)
May be copied and distributed provided the document is reproduced in its entirety, including this copyright statement, and no fee is collected for its distribution.

- To finish our observations, let's return once more to the context of Matthew 7
    - In vs.1-5 Jesus' was speaking about judging…or we could call it "deciding for another person how they should be righteousness"
        - In those verses Jesus we shouldn't judge others in the church by giving them advice on being righteous
        - When we judge in this way, we create artificial distinctions between members of the body, which destroys our unity
    - And now coming out of that context, Jesus turns the coin over and says "And don't judge the righteousness of the unbelieving world either"
        - Don't give the dogs and swine (i.e., the unclean of the world) holy things, which are your standards for how to be righteous
        - Our advice is holy in the sense that it is based in our knowledge of God and of His word
    - God's word is precious, worthy of honor and set apart for His glory
        - And the Spirit living in us directs our steps of sanctification, impressing these truths upon us and leading us to obey
        - So when we watch the unbelieving world engaged in sin, we may feel a desire to judge that behavior and offer a solution
        - We're tempted to share the insight's we've learned during our years of study in God's word and through our experience in the Body of Christ
        - But as we do this, we forget that the unbelieving world is incapable of appreciating the wisdom of our advice, much less abiding by it
- For example, let's say you befriend an unbelieving couple living together out of wedlock
    - You know their lifestyle is not what God desires
        - You're troubled by their sin, so you tell them that the Bible says they should cease fornicating and should be married
        - That counsel is a holy thing because it's the truth, and the truth is a precious, valuable, and pure thing in a world of lies

© 2018 – Verse By Verse Ministry International (www.versebyverseministry.org)
May be copied and distributed provided the document is reproduced in its entirety, including this copyright statement, and no fee is collected for its distribution.

        - And like pearls, the truth of God's word has the power to make us more lovely, both to God and to the world

    - Nevertheless, Jesus don't judge unbelievers in this way

        - Don't offer them holy and precious things they cannot appreciate and cannot use

        - They lack the insight to know why your advice is true, and even if they were to follow it, they do not become the least bit holy

        - Like a pig donning pearls, they are still just a unattractive as ever

- Why? Because righteousness comes from God alone by faith alone

    - We can't make unbelievers righteous by our judgments of their behaviors

        - No amount of judging behavior can bring anyone to righteous

        - Even if someone does what we ask of them, they are still unbelieving, unsaved, unholy and destined for eternal judgment

        - We've put our pearls around the neck of a pig, and that pig isn't the least bit more attractive for having received them

    - So if we focus our attention on correcting an unbeliever's *behavior* rather than on their heart of faith, we're wasting our time

        - To borrow from Jesus' illustration, we're putting lipstick on a pig

        - We're trying to give someone the appearance of righteousness without actually bringing them to righteousness

    - And if we're honest about it, we' admit we're doing it primarily to make ourselves feel better

        - We're back to the problem of hypocrisy

        - We done the easy thing and pretended as if we've helped the become more pleasing to God

        - But in reality, we avoided talking about the real problem, which was their lack of faith in Jesus, so they end up in Hell anyway

- Jesus says if His Church makes this mistake, we not only forfeit the chance to be truly helpful to that person, but we also put ourselves in danger

© 2018 – Verse By Verse Ministry International (www.versebyverseministry.org)
May be copied and distributed provided the document is reproduced in its entirety, including this copyright statement, and no fee is collected for its distribution.

- The unbelieving world will turn on us and our sanctimonious advice, and tear us to pieces Jesus says
    - And that's exactly what's happening today in the Church
    - Christians have become better known for what we're *against* than what we stand *for*
    - Many churches are devoted to changing culture and society, forcing unbelievers to adopt Christian morals without ever mentioning the Gospel
- And regrettably, Christians seem to prefer that work over the true mission of saving souls
    - I've found it easier to recruit believers to join in a Christian protest or boycott than to participate in an evangelistic outreach
    - We think it's a victory for Jesus when we see a court case or a legislative action against abortion or homosexual marriage
    - As if these changes in behavior equate to greater righteousness on earth

- They are examples of throwing pearls to swine…it's judging unbelievers expecting that they will benefit from following our convictions
    - But it's putting the cart before the horse
        - We should not be surprised to see sinners sinning…that's why we call them sinners, because they sin
        - And trying to fix their sin problem by changing their behavior is like rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic
        - We may make things look better to us for while, but we haven't changed the end result…everyone dies
    - If we truly want to help the world, we can't treat the symptoms…we have to treat the disease
        - We have to cure the source of sin in the heart, and the cause of sin is the dead spirit inside every person
        - The Bible says everyone is born into the world depraved, unholy, defiled and disinterested the truth
        - Paul says this is the nature of the fallen human heart…

© 2018 – Verse By Verse Ministry International (www.versebyverseministry.org)
May be copied and distributed provided the document is reproduced in its entirety, including this copyright statement, and no fee is collected for its distribution.

Rom. 3:10 as it is written,
"THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;
Rom. 3:11 THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS,
THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;
Rom. 3:12 ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS;
THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD,
THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE."

- The world does not know God, and moreover the Bible says the unsaved heart is incapable of understanding the truth of God on its own

1Cor. 2:14 **But a natural man [unbeliever] does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.**

- So when we judge the sinful behaviors of the unbelieving world, we offer them something they cannot use
- Most will completely ignore it, like a pig trampling pearls
- And in the worst of cases, our judgment incites anger and resentment
- So that in the end they become hardened to the truth

- And even if some may follow our advice and adopt our morals, it's merely external change
  - Our advice won't make them truly righteousness because their heart remains unchanged without the Gospel
  - And even worse, by focusing on their behavior, we in danger of preaching a Gospel of work
  - The Bible says come to Christ as you are by faith alone, so that by our faith we will cleansed of unrighteousness and called to good works in response to our salvation
  - Yet we're teaching unbelievers that they must be clean before coming to Christ and that He accepts us because of our good works

- So judging unbelievers behaviors is a waste of time that does not promote righteousness and will either alienate or confuse them
  - We can see evidence of this happening in the Church today…

© 2018 – Verse By Verse Ministry International (www.versebyverseministry.org)
May be copied and distributed provided the document is reproduced in its entirety, including this copyright statement, and no fee is collected for its distribution.

- A recent Barna Group study found that 45% of unbelievers view Christians as religious extremists

- The survey asked participants to rate 20 activities on how they related to Christianity

  - Included in the list were activities like pressing the government to adopt laws based on morality or using religion to justify discrimination in society, etc.

  - Over 50% of the respondents rated such activities as typical of extremist Christian behavior

  - Then in another Barna research study, they found that nearly 75% of all Americans identified themselves as Christian

  - Yet upon closer examination, Barna estimated that less than half of that number were *actually* confessing, born-again believers

- So in other words, a majority of unbelievers now think that Christianity's goal is imposing it's morals on the culture

  - They see Christians as a bunch of sanctimonious, holier-than-thou, meddlesome busybodies

  - While at the same time, roughly half of those who think their Christians were actually unbelievers

  - They joined an organization dedicated to accomplishing social change and never understand the Gospel themselves

- I wonder if those two trends may be related

  - Could it be we've been throwing pearls to swine, judging unbelievers behaviors by imposing our standards on the culture

  - And in the process sending the world the message that "good" people go to Heaven?

  - And all the while, we were neglecting our true mission to preach the Gospel of faith alone in Jesus Christ alone?

- Did Jesus rail against the injustice of the Roman Empire, or did He say render to Caesar what is Caesar's?

  - Did Jesus give lengthy sermons on the evils of prostitution or tax collection or did comfort the outcasts?

© 2018 – Verse By Verse Ministry International (www.versebyverseministry.org)
May be copied and distributed provided the document is reproduced in its entirety, including this copyright statement, and no fee is collected for its distribution.

        - Did Jesus make earthly social change His agenda, or did He spend His time preaching an eternal Kingdom?

    - Jesus' mission is also our mission…preaching that the Kingdom of God is at hand…preaching the Gospel

        - It wasn't changing the world

        - It was rescuing people put of this world

    - Of course, we want to see the injustices around us addressed…we want to stop depravity and abuse in every form

        - Our hearts ache as we watch sin destroying lives, families, communities and the world

        - But what *will* bring an end to these things?

        - What *will* lead women away from abortion?

        - What *can* turn a person from homosexual lust?

        - How *do* we end drug abuse and child abuse and hatred and murder and all manner of unholiness on earth?

    - Isn't the solution the Gospel?

        - When a heart receives the Gospel, the Spirit comes to live inside that person, and they become instantly righteous before God

        - Moreover, they can now receive the wisdom of God so that in time they may turn from their sin and live in righteous ways

        - The solution begins with heart change and heart change is only possible through faith in the Gospel

        - That's how it worked for us, and that's how it will work for others…that's the *only* way it ever works

- The Church is the only institution in the world in possession of the true solution, because we alone have been entrusted with the Gospel

    - Anyone can pursue political change, anyone can protest unrighteousness, anyone can judge the world's ills

        - But only the Church has the Gospel

        - We alone have the medicine that cures the disease, and that's where we must keep our focus

© 2018 – Verse By Verse Ministry International (www.versebyverseministry.org)
May be copied and distributed provided the document is reproduced in its entirety, including this copyright statement, and no fee is collected for its distribution.

- Yet if the Church becomes preoccupied judging the unsaved world, throwing our pearls at them, then who we fulfill our mission?
    - And if they come to despise us for our self-righteousness, where will they turn when sin leaves them broken seeking answers?
    - We can't allow the enemy to distract us by substituting earthly crusades in place of our eternal mission
    - We aren't here to turn this world into the Kingdom…we're here to recruit citizens *out* of this world
- And to be fair, Jesus isn't asking us to turn a blind eye to sin, nor was He saying that cultural activism is wrong in all cases
    - He's saying that judging the unbelieving world's sin prior to bringing them the Gospel is putting the cart before the horse
    - First we save them, and then we disciple them

- So in vs.1-7, Jesus says we neither judge the believer nor the unbeliever
    - The body of Christ is equally righteous by faith and is to be unified by that faith
        - We all have sin, so who among us is worse than another?
        - And we all stand before God equally righteous by faith, so who among us is better than another?
    - And turning the coin over, the unbelieving world is incapable of benefiting from what know of righteousness unless and until they come to faith also
        - So judging the unbeliever's behavior is pointless and only serves to destroy opportunity to share the truth with them
        - Do not concern yourself with their behaviors…focus on their heart
        - Preach the word of God knowing that it is the kindness of God that brings them to repentance
        - And when they place their trust in Jesus Christ, then they will obtain everything required for life and godliness just as you did

© 2018 – Verse By Verse Ministry International (www.versebyverseministry.org)
May be copied and distributed provided the document is reproduced in its entirety, including this copyright statement, and no fee is collected for its distribution.