

13. Simple Commands to seek Him

10/12/2003

Sometimes we stand so close to a tree that we cannot see the entire forest. While we study the Word of God, we get so excited with new found wisdom and guidance from His Word, we often forget to realize that each verse and each paragraph is connected to one another and compose the message He wants us to understand and practice in our lives.

Today is the case in point. We've study and heard Matthew 12:7-11 so much that many of us can recite it without looking at the Bible. The paragraph itself has its own meaning and it is a stand alone application. However, if we do that, we are going to miss what the Lord Jesus intends us to know in a bigger picture.

We must look at this portion of the scriptures in context. In light of what Jesus spoke in the previous teaching, we have to be careful with how we judge people. On the contrary to the opinion of some people who have on-going sins in their lives, we are allowed to judge others. However, we must examine ourselves before we judge others.

A. SELECTIVE FISHING

Matthew 7:6 Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.

The most powerful of all words is a fitly spoken word, a right word that meets the precise need of the occasion. Mark Twain, a wordsmith himself, once wrote: "The difference between the right word and almost the right word is the difference between lightning and lightning bug."

In His stern denouncement of the Pharisees, corrupt religious leaders in Matthew 23, Jesus sharpens His words and wields them like weapons. He calls the scribes and Pharisees "hypocrites", "blind guides", "fools", "whitewashed tombs", "blood of vipers." I don't think Jesus was very popular among them.

Much could be said about the words Jesus spoke. They could be called radical, controversial, idealistic, enigmatic. But they could never be called dull or drab.

It should be no surprise, then, when we come to the Sermon the Mount, that the words of Christ cut a little sharply in places.

Jesus even went one step further. He is telling us to be careful with what we do with the truth. We are not supposed to share our truth with someone who is not willing to listen to or despising the truth. The One who urges us to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth warns us against casting our pearls before swine. And He who warned us against judging others is the very One calling people names.

Proverbs 23:9 Do not speak in the hearing of a fool, For he will despise the wisdom of your words.

What Jesus is telling us is that those who don't want to hear the truth of God have such dead spirits in their hearts, it is waste of time for us to speak to them about the Good News of Jesus Christ. If people have had plenty of opportunities to hear the truth but do not respond to it, if they stubbornly turn their backs on Christ, if they

take themselves in the role of “dogs” and “pigs,” we are not to go on and on with them, for then we cheapen God’s Gospel by letting them trample it underfoot. This gives us an important application: **Discernment must temper our declaration of the Gospel.**

When I was younger in the Lord Jesus, I thought it was my duty to tell about Jesus to everyone whether they wanted to hear or not. I used to pound their heads with the Bible verses that I had memorized. That was dumb!

B. SIMPLY ASK DADDY

Matthew 7:7-8 “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

This is where I pointed out at the beginning of the sermon about not seeing the entire forest. You all have heard about “Ask, seek and knock” by many Bible teachers before. So had I. It has its own application. There is no doubt about its principles and applications. However, we don’t realize what the context is. Before we go in detail study about this, let’s look at the over all picture:

Jesus told us not to judge others until we examine our hearts in v1-5.

In v 6, He is telling us not to give truth to those who don’t want hear.

From v7-12, He is teaching us how to ask God persistently for the wisdom to judge the person and know the situation.

James 1:5-6 “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”

v13 & 14, the scriptures shows about the choice between the popular road that leads to destruction and the unpopular road that leads to eternal life in heaven.

From v15 to 23, Jesus teaches us about the fruit of individuals who will have the ultimate judgement from the ultimate Judge.

Notice the escalation of urgency in the commands found in verse 7: “Ask..., seek..., knock.” Notice, too, that the verbs are present imperatives. Nowhere in Scripture we are told not to come again and again to God in prayer. In fact, God encourages our coming to Him persistently, continually, and boldly.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 pray without ceasing,

Hebrews 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Which brings us to another principle: **Persistence must characterize our prayers.** So when it comes to prayer, don’t be timid. Be persistent. And count on God to come through.

C. THE WORD PICTURE FOR US TO SEE

Matthew 7:9-11 Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!

Jesus’ desire is to explain how very trustworthy our heavenly Father is. Again He reasons from the lesser to the greater. If an earthly father, being essentially evil and selfish in nature, freely gives his children what they ask for, how much more will our

heavenly Father, being a good and unselfish in His very nature, freely give to His children when they implore Him?

As you pray to this heavenly Father, it is important to keep two things in mind:

- 1) God will answer our prayers in His way.
- 2) He will answer them in His time. But don't be discouraged; persistence pays.

Many faith movement teachers abuse this portion of scripture and Matt 21:22 to point out that God is obligated to give whatever we want. They are deadly wrong. They are making our mighty God as nothing more than an errant boy for us. Their Prosperity Gospel is a heresy. To follow that, you have to ignore what Jesus, Paul, James, Peter and John said in the New Testaments. I believe that leaves only Luke and Mark. But Luke was tight with Apostle Paul and Mark was right behind the footstep of Peter, that means those faith teachers don't have anyone in the New Testament.

D. OTHERS AND US

Matthew 7:12 Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

In verse 12, Jesus shifts from our vertical relationship to our horizontal ones.

Much has been said by various commentators of fact that the Golden Rule is found in a similar - always negative - form elsewhere. Confucius, a Chinese philosopher - "Do not to others what you would not wish done to yourself." Stoics, Greek philosophers - "Do not do to anyone what you yourself would hate." Jewish Rabbi Hillel - "What is hateful to you, do not to anyone else. This is the whole law; all the rest is only commentary."

Although the mining of the Golden Rule wasn't original with Jesus, the refining of it was. He seems to have been the first one to state in a positive way. All others said, "Don't." He said "Do." This is no insignificant point, for the positive way of stating the rule focuses not on passivity but on activity. It puts us on the offensive, saying that our lives should be characterized by doing positive, helpful, merciful things for other people.

This leads us to another important principle: **Modeling must accompany our message.**

E. APPLICATIONS

1) Discernment must temper our declaration.

Past 17 years in the Lord Jesus, I've learned a very important principle regarding witnessing to non-believers. It is not my biblical knowledge that saves them, nor my good look, nor my charm since I have none of them. It is the Holy Spirit who opens their spiritual eyes. Nevertheless, God honors individual's final choice to follow Him or not. But the consequences of bad choice is on that person.

2) Persistence must characterize our prayers.

1 John 5:14-15 Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

3) Modeling must accompany our message.

Talk is cheap and anyone can do it. But it takes godly men and women to do what needs to be done for His glory.

You have listened this teaching patiently. You all have choices to make everyday. The most important choice anyone can make in individual life is whether they want to receive Jesus as the Lord and Savior in their hearts or not. If you consider this salvation message as nothing more than a religious thing, you are choosing the role of pig or dog which could care less about the truth and the only thing matter to them is eating and living short lives however they can. You might ask, "Did you just call me a pig or dog?" No, if you insist your own way over God's eternal gift in Christ Jesus, so you are labeling yourself as a pig or dog. God want to you have eternal life in Christ, not eternal damnation in hell. You have to make that choice. Don't say that you will do it tomorrow. Tomorrow may never come to you. You might die today. Make that choice now.