

**Bible Study of Parables in Matthew's Gospel**  
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**Parables of Jesus – Matthew ch.6-7 Lessons for Living** **No.4**

In this chapter we come to the end of the Sermon on the Mount - and Jesus gives some further "New Directions for Living"

Jesus has already outlined what we are to BE - and how we are to Behave - and what attitudes we are to adopt and practice - and now he concludes with some very challenging words about judging others and how to be wise in the things concerning how to live for him in a hostile world.

His standards seem to be as high as heaven - and seem too hard to keep here on earth. If only everyone belonged to Jesus and behaved like him -what a different world we would be living in - it would be heaven here on earth

One day it will be like that - and meanwhile Jesus wants us to make the part we share with others to be as much like heaven as it can be. We have to start practicing for heaven while we are still here.

**In v12** Jesus simplifies all that He has already said by establishing the "Golden Rule" - "Do to others what you would have them do to you"

This has been described as the "Everest of ethics" - there is no higher concept of what we are expected to be towards others if we are to live to please God.  
"In everything" - do to others what you would have them do to you.

That isn't the world's way - the world says - "Do others before they do you"  
Treat others the way they treat you"

Jesus sets a different standard -  
This is the "Golden rule" for the subjects of His Kingdom here on earth.

The Pharisees didn't teach or practice in that way - they made the Law Negative.  
E.g. "What you don't want done to you - don't do to others".  
That is easier to keep - it is negative.

Jesus changes that into something Positive - something you have to do to others whether they do the same to you or not. Jesus is quite clear that this New direction for living is a New Dimension for living. It makes the very ordinary into something glorious.

Where does He start?

**1. We are to JUDGE with discernment vv1-6**

It might seem from reading **v1** that we are not to make any kind of judgement at all. Evidently this is not so, when compared with other scriptures concerning how we are to make judgements.

Remember that Jesus was telling the citizens of His Kingdom how their behaviour and understanding of life was to be His, rather than that of the religious Pharisees.

**1st Principle in Judging** is to start with yourself..

That is the only way to get the judgement of others into perspective. You will see others in a different way if you want the "Golden Rule" to apply, and that they will judge you as fairly as you have judged them.

We are not told "Not to judge" - We are told "Not to judge unfairly"

**How must we judge others?** We are to judge them as God has judged us. **v2.**

How God judges us will to some extent depend on us. We are all good at judging others by the standards we set for ourselves - and if we are honest sometimes fail to keep. But judging by "our standards" is not the way Jesus judges - He uses the standards set by his Father.

Man very rarely makes standards he cannot reach by his own effort. He rarely aims higher than himself, so that he cannot be judged for failing to keep a law higher than he has set for himself.

Mind you the same man is likely to set higher standards for everybody else, and judge them when they fail to do what he never tried to do. Remember when you point a finger at someone else there are 3 of your fingers pointing at you.

We live by our rules instead of by God's righteousness - and we make ourselves the judges of what is acceptable or not.

I am sure that in the church, as we have known it, the standards have slipped from what we once knew and accepted as the way children of God should live. That is why so much of today's Christian living seems strange to many of the older generations of believers, because man-made standards have set the level of acceptable social behaviour and have replaced the righteous Laws of the Kingdom of God as seen in scripture.

So when Jesus says - "Do not judge" He is referring to the critical and censorious spirit which is often used when men fail to reach the standards others have set.

We fail to realise that we ourselves will be judged by the same measure as we judge others.

So Jesus gives a timely warning about unjust judgements and unnecessary criticism of others. We are told to judge fairly and with discernment - or not at all. This is necessary because rarely do we know all the facts on which to base our judgement of others. We are apt to criticise others for doing badly what we cannot do at all

(e.g. the difference between a spectator and a player - the spectator always knows how to do it better than the players.)

One thing we must always remember is that we are as likely to be as guilty of failing just as much as others have - that is where we must apply the saying that –  
"People living in glass-houses shouldn't throw stones"

We should never criticise others if we cannot do it better ourselves. Of course we will be wonderful people if we never get criticised - but what should we do with the criticism?

We have a tremendous capacity of condemning in others what we cannot see in ourselves.

### **This is what I do -**

- i. If the critic can do it better than me - I listen and learn
- ii. If I can do it better than my critic - I have to teach him to do it better.
- iii. If the critic cannot do it at all - I can ignore the criticism.

**So in v3** Jesus gives, what at first seems a ludicrous example of what he meant?  
He tells the story of the Mote/Beam - the Speck and the plank.

We have 2 standards - one for ourselves and one for others.

Jesus is not saying that the man with a speck in his eye shouldn't judge others, who also may be wrong - but that before he does he should allow someone to take the speck out of his eye so that he can see clearly what he has to do.

The comparison ludicrous- Jesus often used the comparison of such opposite to get the attention of his listeners – e.g. a camel going through the eye of a needle.

Here it is a tree trunk or a speck of sawdust. Both impair vision - and the speck is part of the tree.

If you are going to be an eye-specialist you have to be able to see clearly in order to help others see clearly. How we "See" people is important. We cannot help others with their problems when we cannot see for our own bigger problems. We have to remove the Tree from our own eyes in order to see to remove the speck of dust in someone-else's eye. Then both will see clearly.

The judgement we give is the judgement we get. This whole Sermon of Jesus has to do with treating others as God treated us - with forgiveness and in love and concern for their highest good.

Cp. - How David judged the man who took the lamb of a neighbour for supper?

A man moved to another town - and when he settled in he asked-

"What are the people like who live here?" - Answer - "Just like you"

We are so good at diverting attention to the sins of others, and at the same time not seeing our own. When we sin it is only a little sin - when others are guilty of the same sin it grows into being something huge.

So the "Golden Rule" concerning judgement is this - When you judge your small failings be hard on yourself - When you judge the failing of others be generous and forgiving.

Wouldn't the world be a happier place - and maybe the church would be as well.

## **2. We are to pray with Persistence Read vv7-11**

What we are in prayer is perhaps what we really are.

Quote - "A man is no more than what is when he is on his knees before God"

So when we come to **vv7-8** we are challenged by the simplicity of what Jesus says, '**Ask - Seek – Knock.**' **This is convenient in English by the world ASK**

Sometimes we miss the truth by taking the verse out of context -

We miss the beauty of the jewel by removing it from its setting.

Jesus is not talking about Prayer which is just to get things - but about the relationship which is to exist between the praying child and a Prayer-answering Father.

Jesus puts Prayer into simple, understandable, practical terms.

ASK - SEEK - KNOCK means that we are to pray persistently - We have to keep on asking-seeking- knocking until we receive an answer - Until the lost is found - Until the closed door is opened. We are not to give up or give in until as God said to Jacob - "I will do for you all that I have promised".

**a) ASK** - Why? - In order to receive, and it WILL be given.

It will not be earned - merited - or bought - but it will be given if you ask.

If it isn't worth asking for it isn't worth having.

"James - "You do not have because you do not ask - and sometimes you ask in the wrong way"

God is waiting to answer - but He is always waiting for us to ASK.

So we ask as we pray expecting God to answer.

(Marjorie and Advocate - "What do you want?")

**b) SEEK** - Why? In order to find. Cp. Jer29 v13

God wants us to seek him in order to find him

Seek first the Kingdom and you will find it.

Seek for the hidden treasure and the price-less pearl.

Jesus told another wonderful story in Luke 15 - about seeking and finding such things as a "lost sheep" - a lost coin- and a lost son. He sought until he found it.

If asking involves words then seeking involves Actions.

**c) KNOCK** - Why? - In order to gain admittance

Some knock on closed doors for years - no-one answers because no-one lives there.

As kids we knocked at doors and ran away just to annoy the neighbours.

We often stop knocking and go away before the owner has time to open the door.

Cp. Rev 3 - Jesus knocks at the doors of our hearts for one reason - He wants to come in - and He cannot do so unless we open the door.

Jesus says - everyone who asks receives - everyone who seeks will find - to everyone who knocks at God's door it will be opened. Why?

Because it is the nature of the Father to meet the needs of his children with love and care.

If a child asked for bread what will a loving father give him - a Stone?

If he asks for a fish - will he give a biting serpent?

Earthly fathers give good gifts to their children - Will God do less?

**v11 "How much more"** - Just look at what that implies - cp Luke 11 v13

Among the "Good things" referred to in Matt 7, Luke identifies one of those "good things" as the Holy Spirit .

This is the "Golden Rule" in action -

If we Ask we will receive - If we seek we will find - if we knock it will be opened to us.

This involves 2 things - i. The faith we have in asking

and ii. The faithfulness of the Father in answering.

When we ask we have to be ready to accept the answer He gives and not the one we might think best for us. (e.g. asking in prayer for a new job and then not getting it – E.g. as pithead bath's Superintendent) When God say No to what we ask for it is because he has something better to give. God always gives us something better.

When we seek we have to be able to recognise the worth of the treasure we find - whether in a field or wherever - Can we recognise a Ming vase at a car-boot sale?)

When we knock we have to be prepared to go through the door when the Lord opens it for us- for only then will we make new discoveries of His purposes for us.

**v12 - SO** - therefore - when you have asked and received - sought and found - knocked and had the door opened to a new future - apply the "Golden Rule" to others all around you- for by doing so you will have fulfilled all the Law and Prophets spoke about when they anticipated the coming of the Kingdom.

But when we obey the Law it has to be in the Jesus way and not the Pharisees way.

E.g. -You can drive your car according to the Law - but the Law does not compel you to stop and give a lift to someone who needs one.

What we desire for ourselves we should also want others to have.

What we enjoy most we should share

What we receive we should want others to receive as well

We are to forgive as we have been forgiven.

We are to judge as we would wish to be judged

We should love as we would want to be loved.

It will make for hazardous living - but it will be real living - the kind of living that took Jesus to a Cross - but it will make life here on earth something like it was meant to be - and one day will be. We have to start living the "Golden Rule" today if we are to bring heaven on earth.

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Jesus closed the Sermon with 3 illustrations with which we are all familiar

i. The Narrow and the Wide gates vv13-14

ii The Tree and its Fruit vv15-23

iii. The Wise and the Foolish builders. - vv24-27

We will look briefly at these 3 illustrations - and we will not look for hidden meanings when the real meaning is obvious.

### **1. The TWO Ways** –Read vv13-14

One Wide and one narrow. – One is right and the other wrong. What makes the difference?

The Broad road leads to destruction - it is easy - popular - costs nothing to speed along it. This is the world's way.

The other is narrow and difficult - neglected by many as too costly - so there are only a few who find it. This is heaven's way.

The major difference between these 2 roads is where the lead -

The Broad way leads downwards- and the destination is DESTRUCTION.

The Narrow way is Upwards and it leads to LIFE.

There is no doubt which is the Right Way - but getting on to it requires a choice and a commitment to Christ as Lord and Saviour. We are not to be influenced by the crowds rushing headlong to destruction - but we are to join the minority heading for heaven.

This is the 1st test of our citizenship - we have chosen the Jesus way that follows Him while here on earth and leads to him in future glory.

## **2. The TWO Trees - Read vv15-20**

Not everyone is what they say they are - or pretend to be.

False prophets can wear sheep-skin coats, but have very sharp claws.

We have to discern those who are the True Shepherds and who have the good of the flock at heart, from men who men pass on their own opinions instead of preaching the Word of God.

How can we tell the difference?

Jesus uses the illustration of Trees and fruit.

Trees are known by their fruit and not by their foliage.

I can recognise an apple, but not the leaf of an apple tree.

We are to be judged by what our lives produce. We have to pass the Fruit Test.

A man is known by what fruit he produces and not by the words that he uses.

Fruit is more important than the gifts or talents. "By their fruits you will know them" said Jesus.

v20

What happens to today's fruitless trees? They become tomorrow's firewood v19

The judgement of Jesus upon those who are just pretending - is devastating.

**Read vv21-23.** I needs say no more.

(I have asked myself the question what about the good things that men do, who are not part of the kingdom - well Jesus says - "I recognise what you do - but I don't know you")

## **3. Two Houses – Read vv24-17**

Here Jesus is describing 2 similar houses - built with the same materials and to the same specification. They looked alike but were not alike One wouldn't get a mortgage.

What looked the same was the superstructure - what you couldn't see was the difference - the foundations.

What our lives are built on matters most - the foundation is important.

Too often more is put into the bit that can be seen than in that which supports it.

One foundation was right - the other was wrong

Both could withstand the fine weather - but only 1 could withstand the storm.

We all know what happened - One man built for quick results and didn't dig deep enough.

The other took his time and made sure that what he built his house on was secure.

He had a sure and firm foundation.

When trouble struck both these men -as it does to all of us - whether we stand or fall depends on the foundation (Hurricanes in Florida - mobile homes blown away because they had no foundations.)

So, one man was called wise and the other foolish.

When we apply what Jesus said to building lives, rather than houses, we get the Message Jesus intended.

**Who is the wise man? v24** - He who hears and does what Jesus says.

The foolish man is the one who hears and does not do.

So at the end of the sermon we have 3 choices to make, which really are only one.

Choose the Narrow way - Jesus said - I am the way

Choose to be the Right Tree - and bear fruit for Jesus.

Choose to build on the Firm foundation - the rock which will never move -  
by being obedient to what Jesus says.

Here the Sermon ended - **v28** - and the crowd were amazed when they recognised the authority of Jesus. He received His authority from his Father and his delight was to do the will of His Father

So He applies that to us too - v21.

Those who enter the kingdom do so in order to do the will of God as He did.

There are 2 wills involved and we have to choose which one it will be --

Our will or God's will

We are to Hear and obey the Word – i.e. hear and do what it says.

We are to acknowledge Jesus as both Saviour and Lord.

We are to accept his authority and be prepared to live in love and obedience to him -

And that means making Him the Lord of our lives - and doing as we read in John 2 v5

Whatever he says to you - do it"

We have to practice what Jesus preached.

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