



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Gospel According to St. Matthew

Chapter 7

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Introduction

The Conclusion of the "Sermon On The Mount":

- The nature of judging condemned by Jesus
- How Jesus' "golden rule" differs from that found in other religions
- The importance of doing the Father's will to being saved



An Overview

- The "Sermon On The Mount" continues with Jesus discussing the righteousness of the kingdom with respect to man's relation to man, with a warning regarding judging (1-6)
- The importance of persistence (7-11)
- The "the golden rule" (12)
- It concludes with exhortations to enter the kingdom: choose the narrow and difficult path (13-14)
- Watching for false prophets (15-20)
- Doing the Father's will (21-23)
- Being doers of the Word (24-29)



Do Not Judge (7:1-6)

The term judge is used in more than one sense, but Christ's meaning is plain:

- We must judge ourselves and judge our own acts
- Judging others means to elevate oneself above others
- He does not prohibit the civil judgment of the courts upon evil doers, for this is approved throughout the whole Bible
- He does not prohibit the judgment of the church, through its officers, upon those who walk disorderly, for both He and the apostles have enjoined this



Do Not Judge (7:1-6)

- We are to judge the sin and not the sinners
- He Himself tell us that we are to judge men by their fruits (Mt 7:15-20)
- What He designs to prohibit is impulsive, reckless, and uncharitable judgments, a fault-finding spirit, a disposition to condemn without examination of charges
- Unkind judgment of others will be wisely returned upon ourselves, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ
- Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap (Gal 6:7)



Do Not Judge (7:1-6)

- We are much more quick and acute to judge of small offences in others, than of much larger offences in ourselves
- This was a proverb in frequent use among the Jews
- That man is utterly unfit to show the way of life to others who is himself walking in the way of death
- The man who finds fault with another for sin, while he is more guilty, is a hypocrite
- The best way to judge of the imperfections of others is to be free from greater ones ourselves



Do Not Judge (7:1-6)

- Holy refers to the sacrament of the Lord's supper, and other holy ordinances which are only instituted for the genuine followers of Christ
- Holy, according to the Didache, is the bread and wine of the Eucharist
- The characteristic of dogs is brutality
- To try to instill holy things into such low, unclean, and sordid brutal minds is useless
- The swine were also unclean
- They would have no use for pearls, and perhaps would rush upon those who scattered the pearls



Do Not Judge (7:1-6)

- So, too, there are men so dull, imbruted and senseless, as to reject the pearls of truth
- It is our duty to help and to try to save others, but we must be wise and use common sense
- Dogs would tear
- The swine would trample the pearls under their feet

Keep Asking, Seeking, Knocking (7:7-12)



- There are here three different forms presented of seeking the things which we need from God - asking, 'seeking, and knocking
- The verses signify to seek with earnestness, diligence, and perseverance
- The three represent earnest prayer
- We ask for what we wish; we seek for what we miss; we knock for that from which we feel ourselves shut out
- Ask, as a beggar asks alms
- Seek as the merchantman that seeks goodly pearls
- Sin has shut and barred the door against us
- Knock, as he that desires to enter into the house knocks at the door

Keep Asking, Seeking, Knocking (7:7-12)



- Answering to this threefold representation is the triple assurance of success to our believing efforts
- We must seek with a proper spirit, with humility, sincerity, and perseverance
- We must ask the things which it may be consistent for God to give - that is, things which He has promised to give, and which would be best for us, and most for His own honor, 1 John 5:14

Keep Asking, Seeking, Knocking (7:7-12)



- It is explained by a comparison taken from earthly parents, and their readiness to give their children what they ask
- Bread and fish were the chief articles of food of the Galilean peasant
- The assurance of an answer to prayer is based on the fact that God is our Father
- He treats His children as a good and wise earthly parent would
- No kind parent would mock his child by answering his cry for bread with stones

Keep Asking, Seeking, Knocking (7:7-12)



- Men who have the natural affection of parents, even though sinful men, will not do such things
- God our Father who knows the wants of His children, and what is proper for them, and is able to relieve them, being Lord of heaven and earth
- Not only temporal good things, but all spiritual good things; every supply of grace
- In Luke 11:13, instead of "good things," our Lord asks whether He will not much more give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him
- Act not from selfishness or injustice, but put yourself in the place of the other, and ask what you would expect of him
- This command has been usually called the "Savior's golden rule,"



The Narrow Way (7:13-14)

- Matthew 7:13-29 is the conclusion and Effect of the Sermon on the Mount
- It is the application of the whole preceding discourse
- The leading thought of the whole discourse is the kingdom of heaven and its conditions
- Hence, when the Lord says, *Enter*, He means into the kingdom of heaven
- Nearly every town in Palestine is surrounded by walls and is entered by gates
- The principal ones are wide, with double doors, closed with locks and fastened with iron bars
- The strait gates are in retired corners, are narrow, and are only opened to those who knock



The Narrow Way (7:13-14)

- So, says Christ, is the path to heaven; it is narrow
- It is not "the great highway" that people tread; few go there
- The way to death, on the other hand, is broad; Multitudes are in it; it is the great highway in which people go
- They fall into it easily and without effort, and go without thought
- The reason that men do not find it is not because it is hard to find, but because they prefer to walk in the broad way
- If they wish to leave that and go by a narrow gate to the city, it would require effort and thought
- What is it, St. Augustine asks, that makes this gate so small to us? It is not that it is strait, or narrow, in itself, but that we want to take in our pride, our self-will, our darling sins

You Will Know Them by Their Fruits (7:15-20)



- The word prophet, as used in the Scriptures, means any one who teaches authoritatively the will of God
- A false prophet is one who is a false teacher
- Nothing so much prevents men from entering the strait gate, and becoming true followers of Christ, as the carnal, soothing, flattering doctrines of those who oppose the truth
- They come with a gentle, plausible exterior; persuading men that the gate is not strait nor the way narrow
- The Savior gives the proper test of their character
- People do not judge of a tree by its leaves, or bark, or flowers, but by the fruit which it bears
- The flowers may be beautiful and fragrant; but these are merely ornamental

You Will Know Them by Their Fruits (7:15-20)



- We are to test men and every institution by this principle
- A good tree will not produce bad fruit, and the bad tree will not and cannot produce good fruit
- A man cannot be a saint and a sinner at the same time
- The heart determines and is the only proper interpreter of the actions of our life

You Will Know Them by Their Fruits (7:15-20)



- The test of good and bad trees, good and bad men, good and bad systems, has been presented
- Now the figure is carried further to show their destiny
- The Savior states a principle that seems to run through the whole government of God
- Whatever is useless and evil shall finally be swept away



I Never Knew You (7:21-23)

- The Lord has shown that the entrance into the kingdom is through the narrow gate
- He now shows more particularly what is needed to enter
- Certain ones are described who cannot enter in
- It is necessary that we believe in Christ, that we repent of sin, that we live a holy life, that we love one another
- This is His will, our sanctification
- He teaches us to hear and to do the sayings of the Lord Jesus
- They have omitted the one thing needful, a faithful obedience
- With all their pretensions, they had never been true followers of Christ



I Never Knew You (7:21-23)

- St. Augustine says that for Christ to say, I never knew you, is only another way of saying, You never knew Me
- In spite of all their professions they had been evil doers
- Their religion expended itself in professions and prayers
- Hence, in that day they are commanded to depart
- What it is to so depart we may learn from Matthew 25:41
- It is evident from this passage that many are self-deceived
- St. Paul says that, though he spoke with the tongue of angels, and had the gift of prophecy, and could remove mountains, and had nor charity or love, all would be of no avail, 1 Corinthians 13:1-3



Build on the Rock (7:24-29)

- Jesus closes the sermon on the mount by a beautiful comparison, illustrating the benefit of attending to His words
- The man who hears and does Christ's words is building upon the rock (Mt 16:16)
- Christ is laid for a foundation, and every thing besides Christ is sand
- Palestine is a country of torrents and sands
- This verse gives a picture of the sudden violent storms and sweeping floods which are so common during the rainy season
- The house founded upon the rock could not be undermined and destroyed, but would stand firm
- So, says the Lord, shall it be with those who hear and obey
- They shall stand in the judgment (Ps 1:5)



Build on the Rock (7:24-29)

- Every one knows how transitory and shifting is a sandy foundation
- Some build their hopes upon worldly prosperity
- Let it be observed, that it is not the man who hears or believes these sayings of Christ, whose building shall stand, when the earth and its works are burnt up; but the man who Does them
- There is an awful significance about this close to the wonderful sermon



Build on the Rock (7:24-29)

- No wonder they were astonished
- The whole world still wonders as it studies this sermon
- In all languages there is not a discourse to be found that can be compared with it for purity, and truth, and beauty, and dignity
- Were these doctrines obeyed and loved, how pure and peaceful would be the world!
- How would peace reign in every family and nation!
- The people heard the law defined in such a manner as they had never thought of before; and this sacred system of morality pressed down on their consciences with such clearness and authority as they had never felt under the teaching of their scribes and Pharisees

Build on the Rock (7:24-29)



- He spoke, not as a man, with human doubts and limitations, but as one who was omniscient
- He came from God, and spoke as one divine; not as a human, hesitating, stumbling, limping expounders like the scribes, the interpreters of the Scriptures
- Thus ends a sermon the most strict, pure, holy, profound, and uplifting and inspiring, ever delivered to man; and yet so amazingly simple is the whole that almost a child may apprehend it



Conclusion

- Do we or do we not have a duty to judge between right and wrong and between good and evil?
- What does Jesus mean when He tells the Christian (1) not to give what is holy to dogs and (2) not to throw our pearls before swine?
- Why does Jesus call His listeners "wicked"? Isn't He speaking to His disciples who are righteous men who have made the choice to follow Him?
- What sums up the law and the prophets?



Conclusion

- On what is the comparison of the wide vs. narrow gate based?
- How do false prophets operate? How can we identify them?
- If working signs and wonders in Jesus' name is not itself a safeguard against his condemnation, what is?
- What is the key difference between the wise and foolish listeners?
- Why were the people astonished at Jesus' teaching?



Conclusion

For application:

- Jesus addresses the human tendency to view others' faults as worse than one's own. Of whom are you most critical, or with whom do you compare yourself favorably? What prompts your criticism or comparison? What "log" do you need to remove from yourself?
- How have your natural talents or charismatic gifts contributed to your own growth in holiness? How might they be hindering it?