



Sermon on the Mount: An Invitation to New Creation

Session 9

“Relationship Advice”

I'll never forget the scene or the look on the woman's face when she screamed at me, “Get that child under control!” We were at Jason's Deli, my husband was out of town, and I was attempting to get lunch for my then 2- and 4-year-old children on my own, which at the time was not an easy task. My son had a meltdown, and yes, it was an especially loud one. I was already mortified, and her look of disgust and hurtful words only added salt to the wound. I quickly whisked my kids out of the restaurant and shed a few tears in the parking lot.

There were a few things this woman didn't know when she snapped at me. My son was in speech therapy and didn't have words yet to express his frustration. He also was especially big for his age. Although he was the size four-year-old, I wish he could have been wearing a t-shirt that said, “I'm really only 2.” Would she then have let me off the hook? I'll never know.

But I did learn something from that scenario about judging. You never know what is going on in someone else's life until you have walked in their shoes. How quick have I been to judge others or to jump to conclusions only knowing part of the story? When have I failed to show grace when what someone needed from me was compassion and not judgment? Jesus warns us not to judge, reminding us that the pain that our negative thoughts and words cause to others might also be inflicted back upon us. And for anyone who has experienced the pain of being judged, it is a good motivator to “do to others what you would have them do to you” (Mt. 7:12).

Matthew 7:1-12

7 “Do not judge, or you too will be judged. 2 For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

3 “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 4 How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

6 “Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.

Continued

Matthew 7:1-12 (continued)

7 “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

9 “Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 11 If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! 12 So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

“The problem with pearls for pigs is not that the pigs are not worthy. It is not worthiness that is in question here at all, but helpfulness. Pigs cannot digest pearls, cannot nourish themselves upon them. Likewise for a dog with a Bible or a crucifix. The dog cannot eat it. The reason these animals will finally “turn and rend you,” when you one day step up to them with another load of Bibles or pearls, is that you at least are edible. Anyone who has ever had serious responsibilities of caring for animals will understand immediately what Jesus is saying.”

-- Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 229

Questions for Discussion

1. What stood out to you, encouraged you, or challenged you from this past Sunday's sermon?
2. Have you ever felt judged by someone? Describe the scenario and how it made you feel. What can you learn about judging others based on this situation?
3. What reasons does Jesus give for not judging others in Matthew 5:1-5?
4. What do you think is the difference between “speaking the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15) and judging someone? What role does self-examination play in our ability to handle these difficult conversations the right way (Matthew 6:4-5)?
5. What do you think Jesus means when he says not to “throw your pearls to pigs?” In using this analogy, Dallas Willard says that Jesus was not insulting people or implying that they were “less than,” but rather was speaking to situations where we attempt to give something to people that they are not yet ready for (i.e. A pearl is useless to a pig). Can you think of a situation where this principle might apply?
6. What principles do you learn about prayer in Matthew 7:7-9? Is there anything about this passage that is difficult for you? What encourages you?
7. What do you learn about God's heart when it comes to our prayers? How does this help you persevere in prayer or deal with unanswered prayers in your life?
8. What is something you will do this week to make prayer more of a priority in your life?