

# Rightly Dividing the Gospels

—Installment 39—

The Sermon on the Mount

—Part 13—

Judgment

~ 28 A.D., after Passover

Near Capernaum by the Sea of Galilee

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## I. Brief Review of Overview of the Sermon on the Mount

- A. We are treating Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount conjointly with Luke’s Sermon on the Plain
- B. Audience
  - 1. His disciples, whom he particularly addressed in a public setting among multitudes
    - a. That is, those whom he was preparing to receive and enter his kingdom
- C. Theme
  - 1. The kingdom and its distinctive qualities

## II. Covered so far

- A. Beatitudes ..... (Matt. 5: 3–12; Luke 6: 20–26)
- B. Salt and light..... (Matt. 5: 13–16)
- C. Relationship of Jesus’ Doctrine to OT and Traditional Doctrine..... (Matt. 5: 17–48; Luke 6: 27–36)
  - 1. We considered the meaning of Jesus’ declared purpose to fulfill the OT
    - a. Fulfillment of the OT means satisfying its objective—leading to Christ and the NT
  - 2. We showed that he meant for his commands in this sermon to be applied to Christians .....vv. 19–20
    - a. These commandments pertain to the subjects of the kingdom, i.e. Christians
    - b. Those given in this instructional phase could be obeyed without abrogating the OT law
- D. The Distinctive Doctrines of Jesus ..... Matt. 5: 21–48
  - 1. In this section we saw Jesus modify existing OT doctrines in characteristic ways
    - a. Expanding their scope by spiritual application
    - b. Restricting their permissions in light of underlying spiritual principles
    - c. These modifications make NT law considerably higher than OT law

## III. General Doctrines (covered)

- A. In this section Jesus presents a series of topical NT doctrines without drawing any particular contrast to the OT. Unlike the six commands of the previous section, Jesus' purpose here is NOT to modify the OT commands
  - 1. We see that he carries the OT commands intact into the NT, but with a new characteristic focus akin to that he brought to those commands he did modify
    - a. Interested in the spiritual roots (motive and manner) underpinning the acts
- B. Simplicity and Purity in Service..... Matt. 6: 1–18
  - 1. Almsgiving, prayer, and fasting
    - a. Spiritual character of the acts
    - b. God's reward vs. praise of men
    - c. Problematic prayer
  - 2. The Model Prayer
- C. Single-Minded Service ..... Matt. 6: 19–34
  - 1. Lay not up treasures on earth, but in heaven
    - a. The heart follows the treasure
  - 2. Anxiety
    - a. Take no thought (KJV), do not be anxious (NAS), do not worry (NIV)
    - b. Your Heavenly Father knows
      - i. This is the cure for anxiety
    - c. Seek ye first the kingdom and all these things shall be added unto you

#### IV. General Doctrines, cont'd

- A. Judgment ..... Matt. 7: 1–6; Luke 6: 37–42
  - 1. Review of some key points from sermon *Discernment (In Praise of Judgment)*
    - a. *Discernment* and *judgment* are synonyms
    - b. Scripture can seem to support non-judgment (e.g. this morning's text passage)
    - c. But God loves judgment..... (Ps. 37: 28–31)
    - d. Judgment is a moral faculty essential to successful living
    - e. Lack of judgment is a spiritual disability akin to blindness
    - f. We need Christ's judgment
      - i. Because we will face it in the Day of Judgment
      - ii. He has graciously provided it to us in advance
      - iii. If we will judge ourselves, we can avoid his condemnation
    - g. Judgment can be bad or good
      - i. Bad judgment is what the Bible condemns, not all judgment
        - (i) Unrighteous judgment (condemning good and excusing evil)

- (ii) Judging by appearances or partiality
  - (iii) Excessive, hypocritical, arrogant judgment
- ii. Good judgment is essential and blessed
  - (i) We draw near to God in it
  - (ii) It is the joy of the just
  - (iii) It is the mark of maturity and skill
- 2. “Judge not, that ye be not judged”
  - a. As with many other statements earlier in the sermon, biblical context requires us to recognize limits on what seems to be a universal prohibition
    - i. We know from the teaching of Jesus and his apostles that the certain good kinds of judgment are approved and required:
      - (i) Civil judgment
        - 1. Lawful discriminating between “evildoing” and “doing well”..... I Peter 2: 13–14
      - (ii) Church discipline
        - 1. Fornicator..... I Cor. 5: 11–13
          - a. Paraphrase: Don’t you know that we judge them within the church?.....v. 12
        - 2. Heretic..... Titus 3: 10–11
        - 3. Disorderly .....II Thess. 3: 6
        - 4. Transgressor of doctrine ..... II John 1: 9–11; I Tim. 6: 3–5
      - (iii) Private judgment
        - 1. This was the main thrust of the *Discernment* sermon
        - 2. Wolves in sheep’s clothing ..... Matt. 7: 15–20
        - 3. Causers of strife and division.....Rom. 16: 17
        - 4. False prophets .....I John 4: 1–3
          - a. Try the spirits
    - ii. The prohibition is against bad judgment
      - (i) Based on the attendant explanation he offers, we understand he especially forbids the excessive and arrogant judgment common among the religious leaders of the day
        - 1. Censorious judgment
          - a. Apt to blame and condemn
          - b. Given to fault-finding
          - c. Addicted to scolding
          - d. Rash, hasty, prejudicial
        - 2. Prideful, arrogant judgment
          - a. Not grounded in recognition of a shared need for God’s mercy  
.....Rom. 14: 10–13; James 2: 13

- b. Supposing that human judgment matters ..... I Cor. 4: 3–5
          - i. “I judge not mine own self” — I apply only God’s judgment to myself
          - ii. Supposing that the condemned answer to us ..... Rom 14: 4
  - 3. Uncharitable..... I Cor. 13: 4–7
3. “With what measure ye mete”
  - a. Jesus here warns (without naming them) the scribes and Pharisees, whose censorious judgments of him darken many pages of the gospel accounts
  - b. The merciless can expect no mercy ..... (James 2: 13)
  - c. This is a special case of a universal law: Whatever you sow, that you shall also reap ..... Gal. 6: 7
    - i. Therefore do not sow condemnation; sow mercy instead
4. “Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over”
  - a. This metaphor refers to the generous lading of a garment (or other container) as with overflowing grain
    - i. It was the usual practice to carry small burdens in the fold of the coat, supported by the sash
      - (i) This is the meaning of “into your bosom” (pockets were unknown)
      - (ii) Or the whole garment could be removed and gathered upon itself like a bag ..... Ruth 3: 15
5. “Can the blind lead the blind?”
  - a. This rhetorical question teaches us that correct moral guidance can be obtained only from the morally correct; it is folly to try to lead from a position of blindness
    - i. This further teaches us to look first to our own faults
6. “The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master”
  - a. Our own disciples cannot follow us to moral attainments we have not ourselves attained
7. “Why beholdest thou the mote”
  - a. Jesus’ grotesque depiction of a man with a beam (i.e. a rafter) in his eye teaches us that the censorious spirit often accompanies grotesque sin
    - i. In his vivid metaphor, both parties suffer the same kind of fault, but he with the greater fault arrogantly presumes to correct him with the lesser
  - b. “Thou hypocrite”
    - i. This metaphor perfectly distills the meaning of hypocrisy
      - (i) Literally, to criticize too little, the word hypocrisy refers to the sinful tendency to judge oneself leniently relative to others
    - ii. The lesson, again, is that we should look first to our own faults
    - iii. And, he who would successfully teach or admonish must first himself be taught and admonished
      - (i) Men cannot be pushed to reform; they may only be led ..... Gal. 6: 1
      - (ii) So long as we remain in our own sin, we are blind leaders of the blind
8. “Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine”

- a. With this admonition Jesus makes clear what we asserted at the beginning of the sermon: that he is not forbidding all judgment, only bad judgment
- b. His command is to withhold our holy ministry from “dogs” and “swine”
  - i. Dogs and swine were unclean to the Jews by law, and seldom if ever domesticated
    - (i) These feral and often vicious animals were avoided by the Jews
    - (ii) They knew how to recognize them for what they were, and not to provoke them with displays of food or shiny objects
  - ii. Holy food could not be given even to unclean persons; what remained after the priests had eaten was burned with fire ..... Lev. 7: 16–20
    - (i) To give such food to animals would be to profane it, a grave sin
  - iii. But he speaks metaphorically about an equivalent kind of person: persistently unclean and dangerous
  - iv. We cannot recognize “dogs” and “swine” among people without judgment
    - (i) We must not treat such persons as priests and kings, the proper recipients of holy food and rich ornamentation
- c. He later teaches that sowing should be done generously, scattering seed liberally to soils that may prove unfruitful
  - i. But some threshold of resistance exists beyond which the sowing passes from futility to profanity; from holy service to degradation of holy things
    - (i) Examples where this threshold might be crossed:
      1. Baptizing someone who asks it in mockery or mischief
      2. Officiating a wedding for an adulterous or otherwise illicit marriage
      3. Preaching or praying unwelcome at a whorehouse, saloon or abortion clinic
      4. Pressing the gospel on those who only despise it
- d. We should press our ministry even in anticipation of some rejection, but not into anticipation of “turning” and “rending” after the manner of vicious animals
  - i. Jesus refused at times to answer the scribes and priests persecuting him..... Luke 20: 1–8
  - ii. He instructed his disciples to shake the dust off their feet upon rejection..... Matt. 10: 11–16
  - iii. The apostles turned from the persecuting Jews to preach to the Gentiles (first missionary journey, Pisidian Antioch) ..... Acts 13: 45–46
  - iv. And again (third journey, Ephesus) ..... Acts 19: 8–10
- e. The lesson: do not be censoriously judgmental, but do practice wise and charitable judgment