

Sermon Reflections

Judging Others and the Golden Rule (Matthew 7:1-12)

Summary: Live by King Jesus' "Golden Rule," especially as you humbly judge others.

1. Consider Others with Humble Discernment (vv. 1-6)

- Verse 1 commands us to not judge others, and yet everyone is making value judgments all the time (including saying that people are wrong when they judge others!). God also judges people, per verse 1. Why is it right for God to judge? What types of categories does He lump people in for judgment? How does He judge those various types?
- How do you define "judging"? And, in what ways is it related to, and/or different from, an opinion? What does Scripture say about how we should deal with our own and others' opinions? Are there things the Bible would have us pass judgment on that aren't just opinion?
- What purposes does judging serve, for unbelievers and also for believers? When, where, and with what attitude should judgment be expressed? How can you ensure your attitude would be what God wants you to have?
- How can you ensure that you do not have a log in your eye when you are judging others? How do you determine when you should (or even, in some cases, must) judge, while you know you are still an imperfect, sinful human being? Can you explain the difference between a log and a speck?
- How can you identify a dog/pig? Why does judgment work well in believers and some unbelievers, while it works poorly in dogs and pigs? What bad things happen when we judge dogs and pigs?

2. Call on Your Father with Hopeful Determination (vv. 7-11)

- We are commanded to pray because we cannot judge correctly by simply relying on our own abilities. It should be desperate, determined prayer; what does such prayer look like? And yet, we are commanded to pray hopefully; how does this additionally color what our prayer should be like?
- In what ways do earthly fathers fail to give what we need, where our Heavenly Father won't fail us?
- Verses 7-11 aren't a blank check to get whatever we want from our Father, as is clear from a review of chapter 6. What things does He delight to hear His children ask for and to give His children?
- Recalling the command to pray for the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13), how does the Spirit assist our judging?

3. Care for Others with His Humble Deference (v. 12)

- What was a typical Jewish understanding of how to treat others, as exemplified in Rabbi Hillel's teaching, and how was that teaching different than the teaching Jesus provides in the so-called "Golden Rule" of verse 12? As well, how does Jesus' approach fully display all of God's attributes (e.g., more accurately show God's love, mercy, etc.)?
- Jesus fulfilled the Law and Prophets (see 5:17), not only by His own obedience but also by His people applying the Golden Rule (which is part of what those Law and Prophets were getting at). Survey the blessings under the New Covenant and consider how New Creation realities fulfill what was spoken of by the Law and Prophets.
- Suppose you talk with a follower of another religion or philosophy who says they also believe the Golden Rule. Without even knowing the details of their religious or philosophical beliefs, what can you tell them about Jesus' teaching on the Rule where you know their basis (worldview) will be different from yours? What does the Bible tell you about the unbelievers' worldview?
- Name three people in your life with whom you are not applying the Golden Rule, and describe how you are failing and what you need to change. As well, explain specifically how this will spiritually benefit them (i.e., as God measures true blessing; list specific Scriptures identifying each benefit).