

# The Sermon on the Mount

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## Outline XVII Prayer, and the Golden Rule

Matt. 7:7-12 — “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. For what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him? Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.”

### I. Prayer, Vss. 7:11:

#### A. Connection:

What connection, if any, is there between these verses about asking and receiving, and the preceding as well as the succeeding verses? In reply to this question, it seems that Christ means to imply that to judge aright (vss. 1-5) and to exercise discrimination in the ministration of holy things (vs. 6) is possible only in the way of prayer. To persevere and to grow in the exercise of love to the neighbor demands persevering prayer.

#### B. The Exhortation Itself:

1. Ask — Asking implies a twofold consciousness. A consciousness of need, and a consciousness that only God can fulfill that need.
2. Seek — Seeking is asking plus earnest endeavor. One certainly, for example, cannot and may not ask God to teach him wisdom without manifesting an earnest endeavor by the use of the means of grace to attain it. Another example, one cannot ask to be kept from temptation and deliberately seek it.
3. Knock — Knocking denotes perseverance in asking and seeking. One keeps on knocking until the door is opened. Christians must persevere in their prayers.

#### C. The Promise:

1. Such asking, seeking and knocking is not in vain. God answers it. Notice that “given”, “find” and “opened” correspond to the words “ask”, “seek” and “knock”. Vs. 8 once more repeats the certainty of answer to prayer. No one asks, seeks or knocks in vain.
2. In vss. 8-11 the Savior further emphasizes the certainty of prayer’s answer by an argument from the lesser to the greater. If the earthly father, who after all is evil, will give good gifts (bread and fish were the two main foods in Palestine) to his children, certainly then the heavenly Father will give good gifts to them that ask him.

**Questions:** Why cannot one expect to receive growth in grace without diligent use of the means of grace? Is it possible to grow by the means of grace without using them prayerfully? Why do vss. 9 and 10 speak of bread and fish? Is there anything in vs. 11 that teaches the “total depravity” of the natural man? Why does vs. 11 say that the Father will give good things “to them that ask him”; why not rather, “to His children”? Why are not all petitions granted of God?

**II. The Golden Rule, Vs. 12,** “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.”

A. Notice the word “therefore”. This suggests a conclusion from the preceding.

Undoubtedly it represents a practical summary of the second table of the law, of your duty to the neighbor of which the first eleven verses are speaking. However, I believe we should, also, not fail to see the connection between this verse and the preceding. If we ask, we receive, and then we can love the neighbor. Besides, if God grants us who are unworthy what we ask of Him, then it is the Christian’s duty out of thankfulness to God to deal with others as he wishes to be dealt with. Gratitude, and a life of gratitude ought to follow such a free reception of grace.

B. The Exhortation Itself. — Plainly it is a brief, practical summary of our duty toward our fellow men. As we, as Christians, desire to be treated, so we are to treat others.

C. “For this is the law and the prophets”. By the law and the prophets we are to understand the Scriptures, the Old Testament which was the only part of the Scriptures in existence when Jesus preached this Sermon on the Mount. Note that Christ did not say that this so-called Golden rule is the whole law and the prophets. It most certainly does not represent the whole duty of man. Man has a duty toward God as well as toward men.

**Questions:** Is it possible for the unregenerate to observe the Golden Rule? Why does Jesus say “all things”; why not merely “many things”? Is it proper to teach observance of the Golden Rule without teaching the doctrines of sin and grace, as the Modernists do? We would not like Hindu missionaries among us; is it then right for us to send missionaries to labor among the Hindu's in India?

### **Outline XVIII**

#### **Exhortation: To enter the Strait Gate and to beware of False Prophets**

Matt. 7:13-20—“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereto: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into a fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.”

With vs. 13 a new and final section of the Sermon on the Mount begins. The first main section, Matt. 5:3-16, contained a description of the citizens of the kingdom themselves, of their blessedness and of their position in the world. The second main section, Matt. 5:17 to Matt. 7:12 described the righteousness of the kingdom as demanded by the law, properly interpreted, both in relation to God and to man. The third main section begins with vs. 13 and continues through vs. 27; it contains a solemn exhortation to enter the kingdom, it warns against false prophets, it emphasizes that not every one that says “Lord, Lord” shall enter the kingdom, and it concludes with the illustration of the two builders.

## **1. Enter the Strait Gate and the Narrow Way, vss. 13, 14:**

A. The Two Gates stand at the beginning of the way and not at the end. They open up to the way. Hence, to enter must be taken as the conscious entrance here in this life. To enter the strait gate is figurative language to describe repentance and conversion from sin and evil to the living God and the righteousness of the kingdom. Such conversion is the evidence and fruit of regeneration.

B. The Way. Not only the gate is strait, demanding as it does sincere repentance and humility with trust in Christ, but also the way of life that follows is narrow. A Christian must travel up-stream, against the current: he must daily deny himself and take up his cross and follow Jesus. He cannot go arm in arm with the world, and walk the narrow way. There is sacrifice, continual sacrifice to be made.

C. The End. The narrow way leads to life. Already here below to live apart from God is death, to live in fellowship with Him is life, but especially hereafter. But the broad way leads to destruction.

D. The Travelers. "Many" go in at the wide gate and walk the broad way: the majority and mass of mankind walk the way of perdition. "Few", compared to the many that go lost, enter the narrow gate.

E. In view of the end of the two ways, how imperative it is to enter only the strait gate and the narrow way!

**Questions:** Why does Jesus speak of two and only two gates? Who speak of only one gate, one way and one end for all? Does present-day Christendom sufficiently emphasize the narrowness of the way and gate? In what sense is the "broad" way "broad"? How do you harmonize that we are here taught that "few" are saved, while Rev. 7:9 speaks of "a great multitude"? Is "destruction" the same as "annihilation"?

## **II. Beware of False Prophets, vss. 15-20**

There always have been, and always will be, unto the end of the world, false prophets who seek to lead the church of God astray. Matt. 24:11 emphasizes that one of the signs of the times is the increase of false prophets in the world. Already today their number is legion. Think of such people as the modernist preachers, Aimee Semple McPherson, Father Divine, etc. etc. Their pernicious literature floods the markets, and their siren calls come to you into your homes over the radio. Christ describes them, and shows how they may be recognized.

### **A. Their Description:**

#### **1. What they actually are:**

a. False Prophets. They are prophets, i.e., ministers, "evangelists", professors of theology, etc. They often write a string of letters after their names. But they are none the less false prophets. They were never truly called of God to preach and teach, neither do they bring the Word of God. When they do use Scripture, they twist and contort it to suit their convenience and to fit their wicked purpose.

b. Ravening wolves. Wolves are predatory animals. By stealth and craft, they plunder the shepherd's flock. So, too, these men, they lead men astray; if it were possible they would lead the very elect astray. They may be earnest, but it is the earnestness of Satan. They only destroy, and mislead.

#### **2. How they Come:**

a. Notice that Christ's words imply that they do come to you. Wherever the church

is, there next to the line of prophecy is the line of false prophecy. As in Israel of old. They come to us through their literature, over the radio, and if they can they climb your pulpits.

b. But they come in sheep's clothing. That is, as innocent, harmless, attractive, appealing leaders. They come as though sent by Christ, they use the Bible, they act as though they seek your true welfare. They speak piously. Just exactly for that reason it is so necessary to be able to penetrate the mask. If they came as they really are, they could not threaten: but now because they come as angels of light, while they are ravaging wolves, it is so necessary to beware. Otherwise you will realize that they are false teachers, and before you know it they will have robbed you of God and His Christ, of the Scriptures and of faith, and carried you unknowingly on the broad way that leadeth to destruction.

B. Their Recognition, vs. 16-20:

Christ answers the question. How can these false teachers be recognized? The answer is simply. By their fruits.

1. The example is from nature. A tree always brings forth fruit according to its kind. A fig tree does not bear thistles, nor a vine thorns. An apple tree bears apples. A good tree bears good fruit, an evil tree evil fruit. So too it is with men. If their fruits are evil, then their heart and inmost being is evil. If their fruits are good, then their hearts are regenerated. Wicked men only bear evil fruit: unbelief, enmity, hatred, malice, sin.

2. But what are the fruits of the false teachers by which they may be known. There are three possibilities: (a) Their own personal life and action betrays them: (b) The fruit of their preaching upon the congregation betrays them, because the congregation departs from the fear of God under their leadership; (c) Their preaching itself is the fruit that is evil, since it departs from the Word of God. Which of these three is meant? Personally, I believe, the emphasis falls upon the third. Their doctrine itself betrays them. Thus, Scripture always conceives of false prophets as teaching a false doctrine, cf. II Peter 2:13; I Jon. 4:1-3, etc. However, it stands to reason that also their lives will demonstrate worldly-mindedness, as will also be the fruit of their preaching in the congregation where they labor.

3. Hence, to recognize false prophets, it is necessary to be acquainted with the truth, positively and negatively. Only thus can we recognize their true character.

**Questions:** Is earnestness a safe test to discern the false prophet from the true? Why do the false prophets come in sheep's clothing? The Christian is a good tree, but does he bring forth only good fruit? Does the carnal man bring forth only bad fruit? Are Arminian preachers false prophets? How can you prove that Fosdick, Preston Bradley, and their brood, are false prophets? Are the elect ever led astray by false prophets, fully and finally? Can the elect for a time be led astray by false prophets?

### **Outline XIX** **The Pious Ungodly**

Matt. 7:21-23—"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and

in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

If one takes the church institute as it appears in this world at face value, how many, many enter the kingdom. If you take the church in its broadest sense, including the Reformed, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, Roman Catholic, Anglican, Eastern Orthodox, and all the rest—how many are on the rolls of the church and thereby claim to be entering the kingdom. Multitudes in this nation call themselves by the name of Christ, multitudes in Europe and Asia and Africa. Multitudes throughout the world claim to be seeking the kingdom.

Are there then “few” saved? The answer given in vs. 21-23 is clear. The day of judgment shall reveal that not every one that saith “Lord, Lord” shall enter.

Many will hear, “I never knew you”. There are countless numbers of those who may fittingly be called: The Pious Ungodly.

A. Their Pious Appearance:

1. Although those of whom the verses speak are ungodly, they seem to be very godly and pious:

a. They say, “Lord, Lord”. The term must undoubtedly be taken as a brief summary of faith, as in the case of “Abba, Father”. I Cor. 13:2 states that no one can say that Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Ghost. On the lips of the true church “Lord, Lord” implies two things: (1) First of all that the believer recognizes Christ as the Lord of His Church, the sovereign Head of the church who rules over all. (2) Secondly, that the believer thereby expresses communion, fellowship, with that Christ—“not our own, but Christ’s”. So viewed it is emphatically necessary to say “Lord’ Lord”. But not everyone that saith “Lord, Lord” shall enter. Many make profession of faith and take this term upon their lips, without truly believing in Christ. They appear to be pious, but it is merely a matter of appearance. Their life and works deny the confession of their lips completely.

b. The text, however, emphasizes that these pious ungodly even abound in works. They do works, many of them. They prophesy and teach i.e., they are ministers, professors, Sunday School teachers, lay-workers, etc. They even cast out devils. Not the Devil; but the devils of drink and social disease, of war and sickness. They clean up the slums and gambling dens. They do wonderful works, and seek to improve the world. Think of the Modernists and their efforts.

2. From all this it is evident that we must think:

a. First of all, of the false prophets spoken of in the preceding verses. They may speak of the cross and of the resurrection, but they mean something wholly different from Scripture. They are ravening wolves, spiritually considered.

b. Secondly, of their followers. Multitudes follow them, and seek them as their teachers. Their churches count among their numbers rich and influential men. All these are eager to be known as benefactors of mankind. They support the “social gospel” of the false prophets.

c. Thirdly, also of all those who by reason of an external confession belong to the church, even in a certain sense conform to the life of the church, but do not really belong to God’s people.

B. Their Real Character:

1. They do not do the will of the Father:

a. The will of the Father is in brief to believe in Christ: to humble ourselves before

God, to cleave to Christ as our only righteousness, and to walk in all good works out of gratitude.

b. These pious ungodly do not do God's will. They say “Lord, Lord” but they do not repent, they do not set their hope on Christ and Him alone, they do not walk in good works before God.

2. Their true character is also brought out by what they are introduced as saying in the last day (the judgment day). Naturally, Jesus does not mean to say that they actually will so argue with Him in the day of judgment; the language is figurative, to bring out their true character in bold relief. They say, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?” This must not be confused with the works which the believers do in Christ's name, i.e., through His power and strength and to His glory. As a matter of fact, the translation “in thy name” is misleading. The little word “in” is not at all in the original; neither is it necessary to insert it; as a matter of fact, its insertion destroys the meaning. It is proper and better to translate “to thy name” or “for thy name”, in the sense of “to thy advantage”, “for thy sake”. In other words, these pious ungodly imply that they were laboring to help Christ bring His kingdom, that they did so much for Him! Furthermore, on this they base their right to enter the kingdom. On that ground that they had worked hard, that they had helped their community, upon that basis they wished to enter. And that, of course, can never be the basis upon which we enter the kingdom of God. It is the basis of works, which is a denial of Christ's finished work.

3. Hence, also vs. 23 calls them workers of iniquity. Jesus does not laud them, or speak of the good sinners do, but He calls them by the name by which they should be called.

C. Their Final Confusion:

1. “In that Day”. This can only mean the final judgment day, when the goats shall be separated from the sheep, and when the kingdom of God will be purified of all the workers of iniquity.

2. “I never knew you”. This means, "I never loved you". “I never confessed you before my Father”, “I never had fellowship with you”.

3. “Depart from me”. The righteous remain with Christ, but the wicked have no place with Christ. They must depart into the place prepared for the Devil and his angels.

**Questions:** What is meant by the saying, “Lord, Lord”? Is it necessary to say this? Is the mere saying enough? From what motive do the pious ungodly do their good works? Do they actually cast out “devils”? Is it too strong to call them “workers of iniquity”? Can one know whether he truly is a child of God, and if so how? Do you think that there are as many external professors in orthodox churches as there are in modernist churches? What does it mean to do the will of the Father?

## **Outline XX** **The Two Builders**

Matt. 7:24-29—“Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be

likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it. And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.”

The “therefore” suggests that this illustration is a conclusion based on the foregoing. In a sense it is based on the verses treated in the previous outline; in a more general way upon the entire Sermon.

A. The Two Builders:

1. Notice they both represent "hearers" of the Word. Hence, Jesus speaks of those who either have heard in the past or still hear in the present the preaching of the Word. They are well acquainted with the way of salvation. Jesus is speaking about people in the church, who know the way.
2. All men are builders. Every thought we think, every deed we do is a stone in the edifice of life we are raising. Every man is building a house, and he must stand or fall with the house he builds. No hearer of the Word fails to build.
3. But all men are not wise builders. Wisdom is not ignorance, neither is knowledge virtue. It is not true that if men only know the way, they will walk in it. Not at all. Wisdom is the ability to co-ordinate and regulate things, to choose the best means with a view to the best end. The wise farmer plants on time, cultivates on time, harvests on time, sells on time. The foolish farmer fails to take all these matters into consideration. The spiritually wise man reckons with God, his law and his Christ. He takes into account the future, while the foolish man only lives for the present.
4. Notice that Jesus again divides the hearers of the Word into two, and only two classes. They are either wise or foolish. They are wise if they reckon with Christ's words: foolish if they fail to do so.
5. Notice that all depends upon the foundation. The houses Christ had in mind were undoubtedly the frail houses that were wholly dependent upon the foundation, especially in case of the storm. Although the foundation upon which men are to build is essentially Christ, in this connection it means the recognition and the doing of God's will, doing the righteousness of the kingdom, through the strength of Christ.

B. What Becomes of the Two Houses:

1. Notice, both houses are put to the test by the storm. The righteous and the wicked both will be tested and tried in the day of Christ's final return.
2. The storm is the day of Judgment. The day, elsewhere called in Scripture, the day of thick darkness.
3. The house of the fool falls, simply because it has no foundation. The other stands, because it has a foundation. Everything depends upon the foundation; and the foundation is the doing of God's will in Christ.

C. Conclusion: Vss. 28, 29:

**Questions:** Prove that knowledge is not virtue. What two different kinds of hearers are there? Are Christians ever guilty of hearing the Word without doing it? If so, in what sense? Why was the fall of the foolish man's house great? What difference did Jesus' audience recognize between His preaching and that of the scribes?

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