

Casting Pearls Before Swine

Call to Worship: Psalm 65
1st Scripture: Matthew 10:1-15
2nd Scripture: Luke 7:6

Hymn #634- *We Praise Thee, O God*
Hymn Insert- *Speak O Lord*
Hymn #387- *I Love to Tell the Story*

Introduction

We continue working through our Lord's "Sermon on the Mount," specifically considering the sinful *actions* of the religious leaders, and how the subjects of God's kingdom ought rather to act in keeping with His will.

Last time, we worked through the controversial and often misused text which addresses our Lord's command to not "judge our brothers." While we are called to graciously and lovingly confront one another, concerning sinful patterns and grievous sins, we ought never to do so with a self-righteous, condemning spirit. The goal of reconciliation and restoration ought always to be at the forefront of our minds, when seeking to confront others, and we ought always to examine our own hearts first, ensuring that we are dealing properly with our own faults, before helping others deal with theirs.

This morning, we move on, to consider an interesting addition that is strapped onto the end of this text by our Lord, which we might liken to an addendum to what we have just gone over, or better yet, a "however," statement. And to this end, we are brought to a place of balance; a line of limitation, as it were, which ought to help govern how far we put ourselves out there, as we seek to conduct a restorative ministry of humble reconciliation. There is, indeed, a place to walk away, not resentfully or arrogantly, but with a sense of quiet humility, when the individual to whom we are seeking to minister, is belligerently refusing our help and counsel. There is a place to shield and protect the dignity of Christ and His Gospel, from those who would seek to take advantage of His kindness (through us), so as, to mock and trash the glory of Christ, our Savior and King. And while we ought not to be quick to place others into this category of judgment, we do need to be consciously aware of this kind of a reality, remembering that honoring Christ and His glory is the single most important duty that belongs to all of us, in all of our ministerial responsibilities.

Before we seek to open up this text then, brethren, let me just leave you with one illustration to help firm up all that I have said so far. We know that we are commanded in the Scriptures to be subject to those who rule over us. As a general principle, we are called to honor, respect and obey our governmental leaders and authorities, first and foremost, as a service to God, remembering that it is God who has ultimately appointed our leaders unto their positions of authority. However, we might add an addendum to this command, or a conditional boundary, which we must always keep in mind, as we seek to put this command into practice. We are never to obey our governmental leaders when they command us to do anything that contradicts the revealed and moral will of God. And so, if we are commanded not to pray, or not to read the word of God, or not to evangelize, or to break any of God's moral commandments, like the Apostles in the Book of Acts, we ought rather to obey God than men. And so, discernment is needed in all of our acts of obedience, to ensure that we are staying within the proper biblical parameters.

Well, likewise, as a general principle, we ought to be extremely gracious, non-condemning, winsome, humble and restorative, as we seek to deal with the wrongs and offenses of others, but even this loving attitude, which is greatly concerned about the spiritual and physical well-being of others, must not cross a particular boundary, which is given here in our primary text of consideration for this morning. And so, to this end, let us now turn our attention to this text.

I. Casting Pearls Before Swine: The Analogy as it Stands

“Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces” (vs. 6).

Now, it is important that we recognize right from the outset that our Lord's analogy here is not meant to be offensive toward those whom He is speaking against. In other words, He is not using the terms “dogs” or “swine” in an insulting way, as if, He were seeking to denigrate those who oppose the Gospel as “worthless animals.” Rather, he is using these terms as a means of providing an effective illustration, which would have especially resonated with the thinking of

the Jews. And so, to this end, let us consider the analogy, as it stands, first, before drawing out the primary principle that He is seeking to get across to His disciples.

When He states, “Do not give what is holy to the dogs,” this is the picture that He is seeking to convey. Imagine taking of the holy sacrificial offerings, those specific parts that were to be separated unto God (or the priests), which no one else was to go near; or imagine taking of the holy bread of the presence, which was to sit upon the table of showbread in the temple (and which even ordinary Jews could not eat); imagine taking those things which were specifically dedicated to God, as means of atonement and worship; those hallowed foods, and just carelessly tossing them out in the streets to a pack of wild, mangy, feral, unclean dogs. To the Jew, this would be unthinkable. They wouldn’t give what is holy to anyone outside of the priesthood, let alone unclean dogs. And again, to add weight to the overall analogy, we have to understand that our Lord is speaking about wild dogs, which were dangerous, filthy animals. He is not talking about the domesticated “Fido’s, Lassie’s or Asta’s” of the world.

And then, to add to this picture, He provides another vivid image, “Nor cast your pearls before swine.” Imagine taking costly, valuable, precious, beautiful, well-shaped pearls and walking up to a pig pen, and tossing them to the pigs, thinking, “This will certainly serve to adorn these swine well.” You would say, “That’s absurd! The swine would have no concept of the value of those pearls. They would not care for them in any sense or desire to wear them, and the pearls would ultimately wind up trampled upon, destroyed or lost.” And for the Jew, there was nothing more unclean than a pig, which adds ten-fold to the severity of our Lord’s illustration here. Who would take of their finest, most valuable jewels, and deliver them over to unclean, careless, filthy swine? You see, the whole notion is meant to shake you up, and to cause you to become repulsed and taken aback by the very thought of it. That’s what makes the analogy affective, isn’t it? And when our Lord puts this in the form of a command, your immediate response is, “Lord, what are you talking about? Why would you give such a command? In what way would we ever do such an unthinkable thing?”

And so, our Lord continues with the obvious consequence of doing something so foolish. “...Lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.” What might a herd of swine do, if you cast your pearls toward them? Would they appreciate the gift, and make good

use of the pearls, recognizing the inherent value of what you have given them? Of course not. And in fact, more than likely, seeing that what you gave them has no edible benefit, they would trample them under their feet, and then angrily charge you, seeking to tear you to pieces.” Especially in the case of wild boar, such a possibility is not at all far-fetched. They have no interest in precious pearls. They want slop and mud. And wild dogs have no regard for holy offerings. They’ll just devour the food in literally moments. And then, in both cases, they might just turn on you, and attack you, as well.

And so, this is the analogy that our Lord gives, as it stands. Let us move on then, to draw out our Lord’s primary principle, which the analogy is meant to convey.

II. Casting Pearls Before Swine: The General Principle

The primary principle here given then, gets down to the heart and attitude of those who reject your Christian labors (and especially in your desire to present the Gospel) with scorn and mockery. There is a place, especially after putting forth great effort already, to pull back and to refrain from seeking to minister the Gospel to others, not out of anger toward them, but out of a desire to protect the holy integrity of the Gospel and Christ. There is a place to convey the fact that God does not need any of us, and that the salvation of men is to our benefit and not His. There is a place to ensure that the Gospel is not loosely held out as a doormat, to be trampled upon, by those who evidence their great disdain, scorn and contempt for it.

And so, what is the overall relevance of this command, within the context that we are presently addressing? As a general principle, we ought always to be redemptive and restorative in our ministry unto others. And to this end, we ought always to utilize the healing medicine of the Gospel, as our primary means of bringing about all reconciliation and restoration. What Christ has done on the cross for sinners, is the very substance that contains everything that we have to offer anyone, to bring about any and all acts of reconciliation, be it with God and/or others. That’s what the Gospel is all about....building broken bridges, through the Savior who was broken for sinners. And so, we always present Christ crucified as the hope of all means of reconciliation and restoration. He contains everything that is needed to meet every spiritual need of fallen mankind. To this end, we present Him liberally and to all people. However, at times,

there will be those who scorn the Gospel and mock the Christ of the Gospel, to the extent that our continual attempts at ministering to them, can actually serve to cheapen or defile the Gospel which we are presenting. The Gospel is open to all, but the Gospel is also precious, holy and glorious. It is not some simple “make-shift” cure that has no real value or relevance in its own right. It is the life-changing message of what God has done for sinners, in the crushing of His own beloved Son. It is holy ground, and ought never to be treated in some light or common manner. It ought to be put out to all, but never treated as if the scorning and rejecting of it, is some small matter. It is never to be presented in such a way, as if to give the sense that God is so in love with sinners, that He would sacrifice His own integrity and holy glory, to win the lost. God is beyond glorious and His love is incomprehensible, but He is never to be placed below man, in any sense. Continuing to administer the precious gospel to those who are flagrantly spurning it, is to fail to represent God in a holy, righteous and honorable manner. And when we put ourselves out in that way; when we continue to expose the Gospel, as a doormat to be trampled upon by the scornful, we allow what is holy to be defiled, and we open up ourselves to be torn to shreds, by those who have no intention of giving us a serious audience anyway.

Let me give you two examples that I believe can help us appreciate all that we have gone over so far, which can hopefully enable us to make wise use of this command.

1) I believe that the principle given here, can be unlocked, in part, by the command that our Lord gave to His disciples when He sent them out by twos, to the surrounding cities in Galilee. You might recall that He told them not to take anything with them, but to go into each city and to seek the hospitality of those who gladly received their ministry. And in each city, if they were received, they were to minister to the people, and to ensure that God’s blessing would be upon the people. However, if they were rejected, they were to leave that city and to shake the dust off of their feet from the city, indicating that God’s judgment would so be upon the people there, that one would not even want to leave with the dust of the city on their feet.

Furthermore, when the Apostle Paul went out on his missionary journeys, he would always go to the Jews first, at the local synagogue. And if the Jews refused him, he would shake the dust from his feet and turn his attention to the gentiles of that region. What they had was holy and precious. It was a pearl of greatest value. And if it were rejected, it needed to be

known, that the loss was not to God's account. Indeed, the Gospel itself is not an option. If it is rejected, it is to the destruction and condemnation of those who reject it. It contains sinful man's only means of reconciliation with God.

2) There are not many occasions where I can say that I have encountered the type of scorn and rejection that Christ speaks of here (indifference and rejection, yes, but not damaging scorn and mockery), but I can definitely remember having to apply this text, on one specific occasion, where I really understood what our Lord meant here. There was one particular occasion, where I knew for sure, that to continue on with a dialog that I was having with an individual, would have been deeply offensive to the Lord, and harmful to my ministry, at the same time. And, interestingly enough, I was a pretty young Christian at the time.

When the Lord had saved me, I was already working as a dental technician and assistant in a dental office, out in West Babylon. Having my new-found faith, naturally, I wanted to share my faith with the doctors and staff there. And this was not your regular dentist office, with one or two doctors and a handful of assistants...etc. This was an office, where several doctors worked for one doctor, who ran the whole show. And so, there was a lot of room for ministry there. That said, in the break room, several of us would generally congregate throughout the course of the day, to eat lunch or just chat together. It was a great place for interaction, and I sought to make use of it, by opening up about my faith. That said, there was one particular doctor there, who would ask various questions, while the rest would listen in. And I would seek to answer those questions to the best of my ability. However, it started to become obvious that he really had no genuine interest in my answers, and was rather slyly trying to make me look foolish. At a certain point, I realized that if I continued to interact with this individual, especially in this setting, it could potentially destroy the entire witness I was trying to secure in the office. In a very underhanded way, he was scorning and mocking, and trying to use the ministry that I was offering, as a stepping stool for elevating his own sarcasm and wit, in the presence of all who were listening in. He was trampling what was holy underfoot, and also tearing apart my ministry, in the process. And so, by the grace of God, I realized that I needed to avoid discussing spiritual things with him any further, especially in the presence of others.

III. Concluding Applications

1) Let us be careful not to misuse this text, by unnecessarily applying it to every situation where the Gospel is not received. There is a big difference between us being offended because our personal pride has been scratched, and protecting the integrity of the Gospel. We want to be winsome even to those who are not so friendly with us (or who have offended us, in some way); we want to be prepared to all the more highlight the love of Christ by blessing those who curse *us* and who spitefully use *us* and mistreat us, as we have seen throughout the course of this sermon already. Our Lord is not dealing with personal offenses here, and it can be so easy to write off those who have offended *us* in some way, in the name of not “casting pearls before swine.” That is not what this command is addressing.

This has to do with protecting the integrity of *Christ* and the *Gospel*, from those who are scorning or mocking your labors. This has to do with discerning, when your seeking to minister to others (or to confront them in some regard), is evidently going to be used by them, as a means of attempting to bring reproach to Christ.

You might also think of it this way. The religious leaders of our Lord’s time were often crafty and deceptive, trying to trip Him up, while acting as if they were truly interested in His teaching. He, of course, always knew their motives and shut them down. From our standpoint, there is a place to refuse to deal with such arrogance and opposition, especially due to the intentional nature of their wicked designs. Clearly, their motives were impure. There is a difference between someone who is opposed to the Gospel, and yet, willing to discuss things further, and someone who is outright scorning, mocking, and has no true interest in hearing what you have to say. They are just trying to lure you into their shenanigans, with the hope of embarrassing you and denigrating the Gospel that you are holding out as dear. To this end, out of love for the individual, you don’t want to keep putting the gospel out as a doormat for their scorn and mockery. [Don’t provide fodder for their show of arrogance]

2) Finally, for those of you who are presently outside of Christ; if you are not a Christian here, this morning, it is important to understand that while God has gone to incomprehensible lengths to save sinners (He sent His Son here to die), He doesn’t need any of us, and He will not lay aside His holiness or His divine integrity, for the sake of His creatures. He won’t stop being

God for anyone, nor should He. The worst thing you could ever think, is that God is somehow weeping up in the clouds, because people won't seek Him. That is just not the case. Again, He doesn't need us. We need Him. He does love the world, deeply, and that is why He sent His Son to redeem it by His shed blood, but, all the more, He sent His Son, because that is the only way it could be redeemed. And so, to think for a moment, that God will simply pardon you for your sins, through any other means than His Son... let's just say that you are in for an eternal rude awakening, if that is your mindset.

And so, I plead with you. Don't die in your sins, friends! Come to Christ, by faith, before it is too late! [The Gospel!!!]

AMEN!!!

Benediction: Jude 1:24-25