

Sermon on the Mount

Lesson #18

“Kingdom Responsibilities”

Guard what is Holy Part II

Matthew 7:6

Scripture: Matthew 5:20 *“For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.”*

Introduction:

A couple of months ago Haiti was ravaged by a terrible earthquake. We took up a contribution of more than \$2000.00 to send to them with the Cedar Rapids Church of Christ. Terry Seuferline came and gave us a report of how that mission trip went and it was really a good thing to know that every dime of our money helped feed a large number of hungry people over the course of several days.

Recently our fourth and fifth grade class raised over \$200.00 to send to the needy people in Haiti because they realized the need and wanted to help them in some way.

It felt good for us to make this sacrifice and give the honor and praise up to our God.

But what if our contribution somehow ended up in bad hands. What if, what we had set apart to praise God by helping others, ended up buying camel feed for the San Diego Zoo instead of helping hungry people survive? That would have been a real tragedy wouldn't it, for that which is intended to glorify God to be defiled.

But that didn't happen because we took great effort to guard what was intended to be a holy sacrifice unto God. We sent the money down with our trusted brother Terry Seuferline who would be faithful with his commitment to deliver.

Transitional Statement:

Church, great seriousness and care should be taken to guard that which is holy. To keep that which is sacred, pure and consecrated unto God from becoming defiled.

With this in mind let's read our text for today:

Matthew 7:6 *“Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.”*

I. First of all, this passage presents many challenges

- A. Some people think it is the last point of what Jesus is talking about in verses 1-5 about judging.

B. Some folks think it is connected with the next set of passages about God giving us what we need.

C. Both of these interpretations have possibilities and I encourage you to explore them.

1. However, today I would like for us to simply consider, that this verse by itself represents one of our kingdom responsibilities...the responsibility to guard that which is holy.

III. So when Jesus begins by saying“Do not give what is holy to dogs...”

A. Does this language startle you a little bit? If it does...your not alone.

1. Most of the time we as Christians see and feel the loving side of Jesus.
2. After all we live out our spirituality in the shadow of His wonderful grace and mercy.
3. And through scripture we have all witnessed time and time again His wonderful patience and forgiveness.... like the way He dealt with the woman at the well, with Peter, with the woman caught in adultery, and even at the cross with the whole of the Jewish nation.
4. In view of such a gentle and loving Jesus, this statement can seem harsh?

B. At some level, is it possible that we as Christians have bought into the idea that Jesus is a wimpy Lord? Have we tried to mold Jesus into a world view of toleration, making Jesus and His saving gospel something to be simply formulated by each person or something to be negotiated by majority thinking.

1. If this is true holiness has been defiled.

B. Make no mistake Jesus is a powerful savior and He guards that which is holy

1. His use of parables was to frustrate the understanding of those who would malign the word of God and defile it for selfish gain. Matthew 13:10-13
2. He exposed the Scribes and the Pharisees for what their actions represented.
 - a. Calling them hypocrites, white-washed tombs and brood of vipers in Matthew 23:27,23
3. He explained to the Syrophenician woman, who asked Jesus to heal her demon possessed daughter, that it was not good to take the children's bread and through it to the dogs. Matthew 15:26
4. He even turned over the money changers tables in the temple. Matthew 21:12
5. So on certain occasions Jesus has to call an Ace and Ace and a Spade a Spade.
 - a. Not worrying about confrontation....but protecting what is holy

D. When Jesus brings up “not to give what is holy to dogs, He is pointing to our sacrifices.

1. Sacrifices are basically gifts we give to God to honor and please Him.
2. Over the lifetime of Christian maturity our sacrifices should grow
3. As we grow closer to God they should become more meaningful to us.
4. And acceptable sacrifices are those which are made toward the end of growing God’s honor among men.
 - a. They are not ever to be self serving
5. God is glorified by all that is set aside as sacred, pure and concentered for Him
 - a. And is received as a pleasing aroma by Him. Eph 5:2

E. So He says we are not to give holy sacrifices to dogs.

1. Think about this great analogy with me for a minute.
2. Think for a moment about the temple in Jerusalem, with your imagination see the priests slaughtering animals preparing them as holy sacrifices unto God , watch as they prepare grain offerings and drink offerings.
 - a. See the smoke from the fire on the altar
 - b. See the table for the bread and the lamp stand
 - c. Smell the incense
3. Now, can you imagine a priest, right before that awesome moment when he would place the animal upon the altar to send the smoke up to God, can you imagine him cutting some of that holy meat off and throwing it over the wall to feed the dogs outside the camp?
 - a. To give that which has been consecrated and set aside for God to a mangy old varmint.
 - b. NO!That would be an abomination right?
4. The things that are holy have been set aside. They are consecrated and dedicated for God and are not to be given to dogs.
 - a. Now, in context the dogs here are the Scribes and the Pharisees
 - b. This is not a mean devaluation of their person
 - 1) But it designates their behavior
 - 2) Like calling them whitewashed tombs or brood of vipers, it described their actions.

5. The strong connection to this analogy comes by understanding what dogs were in those days.
 - a. Middle eastern dogs in the first century were not typically your domesticated house pets. They were pack animals like hyenas or jackals who lived outside the city walls and spent their whole existence ravaging for food in and around the city dump to satisfy their own hunger.
 - b. The dogs didn't care one thing about the city of Jerusalem or its people, except to fill their own bellies.
 - c. So were the Scribes and Pharisees, they circled God's intention only looking for scraps to satisfy their own desires.
 - 1) Here the dogs that Jesus is talking about are like our modern day vultures.
 - 2) And so were the Scribe and Pharisees to which Jesus said don't feed them what is holy.

6. Church there are people in this world that we must pull away from so they will not make a mockery out of the saving blood of Jesus Christ.
 - a. So that they will not use up all our kingdom time.
 - b. Jesus said to the man at the pool of Bethesda, before giving him His time....do you wish to get well? John 5:6
 - 1) It is ok for us to examine peoples motives before we tie up a bunch of precious kingdom time.
 - 2) We must spend our time as serious stewards of holiness
 - 3) Making every minute count
 - 4) And pulling away from useless theological wrangling with people who are only looking for scraps.
 - c. We shouldn't mistake this for judging others....it is common sense discernment that Jesus calls us to.
 - d. It is upholding what God says in the wake of Nadab and Abihu. Lev 10
 - 1) It is making sure that God is honored above all things
 - e. It's knowing when to shake the dust off our feet ...Matthew 10:14

7. Let me tell you church, if we have to get confrontational with someone to uphold the honor of God....so be it. If we have to turn our backs and simply walk away.....may God have all the glory.

IV. Then Jesus goes on to talk about pearls and pigs by saying:

“...and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.”

A. First of all, pearls represent the precious things of the kingdom of God

1. Sometimes, perhaps, our Christianity might get a bit routine and I know that we can get into spiritual ruts from time to time, so let's just take a minute to be reminded of the preciousness of God's kingdom.
 - a. First of all, God's kingdom offers true relationship with God
 - 1) Where the veil (separation) of the temple is torn down.
 - 2) Where we have boldness to approach the throne of grace
 - 3) In His presencethat's where I always want to be....
 - b. In God's kingdom the blood of Jesus offers continual cleansing from sin1 John 1:7
 - c. In God's kingdom we don't stand alone.
 - 1) Jesus stands as our high priest pleading our case before God.
 - 2) The Holy Spirit takes up residence in our hearts and guarantees our inheritance.
 - d. In God's kingdom grace and mercy shower us like rain from heaven
 - e. And in God's kingdom we find our greatest treasurethe saving gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God.
2. Latter in Matthew 13:45 Jesus points to great value of God's kingdom when he talks about a merchant who finding a great pearl gave up everything he had to get it.

B. Now, being reminded of the preciousness of God's kingdom Jesus says not to cast that preciousness before the pigs.

1. Here Jesus likens the Scribes and Pharisees to pigs....boy talk about a slap in the face to a Jew.
 - a. Pigs because they everything is about them.
 - b. I bet you have never had a pig come up to you and ask you if your having a good day....all they care about it their day.
2. Jesus tells us to refrain from placing the precious things of the kingdom before piggish people.
 - a. Because they will trample it

- 1) Like putting a pearl necklace in the mud before a pig. The pig will sniff around and when he discovers that it won't fill the desires of his belly he will trample it down into the mud.
- 2) Why? Because the pig is selfish and doesn't understand value
3. The Scribes and Pharisees were doing the same thing. They were trampling precious kingdom things into the mud as they tried to approach God on their own terms.

C. With all this Jesus warns that the pigs will also “...*turn and tear you to pieces*”

1. When they don't get what they want. When their bellies aren't full...somebody has to pay.
2. And part of what we must guard in God's precious kingdom is ourselves. God has given each of us kingdom work and responsibility and the influence to carry it...and he doesn't want us beaten up by the pigs.
3. Maybe what Jesus is saying is....why wrestle with pigs when there are plenty of people who genuinely care about knowing more of the truths of God.

Conclusion:

Maybe sometimes we tend to forget the holy sacrificial nature of our lives.

Maybe our tendency is to get down and wrestle with the pigs.

God wants us to be wise discerning stewards.

-Guarding that which is holy unto his pleasure.