

## Dogs and Hogs

People of God, my sermon text this morning is just one verse. Matthew 7:6 – *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.*”

In my sermon last we discussed what Jesus meant when he said Judge not, that you be not judged. Which means, Do not be overly critical toward your fellow believers. Do not be a fault finder and a nitpicker. Do not be a person who demands moral and theological and ideological perfections from others, which you yourself are not able to perform. For the judgment with which you judge, you too will be judged.

Furthermore, Christ says that we need to take the log out of our own eye before we take the speck out of someone else’s. Christ is condemning the tendency of Christians to hypocritically scrutinize the minor faults of others, *especially* while they overlook their own more serious faults. Deal with your own sins, faults, and shortcomings first, before you try to help others with their problems.

But once you have dealt with your issues, you are to judge our brothers in Christ using good judgment – if the need arise. If the need arise! Do not go searching for an opportunity to correct a person. Our duty most of the time is to overlook a sin. And we trust in the Holy Spirit to change lives by the preaching of the Word. Which means, we all need to have a great amount of patience with one another.

The Pastor’s calling is to *preach the word, in season and out of season, to reprove, rebuke and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.* And if the Pastor is called to do these things with patience, how much

more should each of you be patient with the error and shortcomings and moral faults of your fellow Christians.

Thus, when the opportunity arises for you to bring a rebuke or correction to your brother or sister in Christ, you should do so that with all kindness, and gentleness, and in love.

For the problem that one may encounter when bringing a rebuking judgment to a brother, is, you may encounter resistance. You may encounter resentment. You may encounter a defensive posture. This person might refuse to acknowledge his faults, and instead may shift the blame and accuse someone else. He may in fact, even turn around and attack you for bringing the judgment.

As one commentator states *“The duty of reproofing (which simply means to criticize, to point out a persons faults) is one of the most difficult and delicate ever attempted. The people who are most rash in adventuring upon it too often fall into the greatest blunders, while those who are really fitted to undertake it shrink from the attempt. The mere utterance of a protest is generally worse than useless. It only raises anger and provokes to greater obstinacy. Unless there is some probability of convincing a man of the wrongness of his conduct, there is little good in administering rebukes to him.”* Further, *“It is not the duty of any man to raise up enemies without cause. We should all seek, as far as in us lies, to live peaceably with all men.”*<sup>1</sup>

Have you ever experienced that? There are people that no matter how many times and in how many different ways you approach them with some sin, fault, or problem they have they always attack you. They are never concerned to listen to what you have to say. These people are always in the right, or they are misunderstood, or

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<sup>1</sup> The Pulpit Commentary, Proverbs, 186.

whatever. They always have a reason to disregard what you say to them, usually responding with mocking and reviling.

These types of people who refuse to hear the loving correction of a fellow believer, and who persist in their sinful and wicked behavior, they are the dogs and hogs that Jesus speaks of here, when he says, *Do not give what is holy to the dogs and do not cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.*

Dogs and hogs are both unclean animals in the OC. And we are not talking about your household dog. We are talking about the wild dogs that roamed the streets in packs. Like those dogs who devoured Jezebel's body when she was thrown from the tower.

Likewise 2 Peter 2:22 portray false teachers who are "slaves of corruption." They escaped the pollution of the world through the knowledge of Christ, but they became again entangled in them and were overcome. They are like the dog who returns to its own vomit, and the sow who has bathed herself, only to return to wallow in the mud again.

These unclean animals persist in their own filth and attack those who try to help to get them out of the muck and mire of their sin.

Jesus says therefore, do not give to dogs what is holy. And do not give pearls to hogs. The reference to "What is holy" is the sacrificial meat that is to be consecrated and placed on the altar for sacrifice. You don't throw that holy sacrificial meat away and give it to the wild dogs. That would be to disgrace God. You don't profane what is holy and consecrated to the Lord.

Likewise, pearls. Pearls were very expensive in the ancient world. And you would not throw them into the pig's food. The pig, upon trying to eat them would discover that they are in fact, inedible, perhaps even hurting its teeth in the process, and in anger he would spit them out and trample them down in the mud, and even turn to attack you for giving him non-food.

The thing that is holy and the pearl, both refer back to the wise counsel that you would give a person to help them remove the log or speck in their eye. But when they refuse to heed your warnings and counsel and corrections, over and over again, and they go back to doing the same foolish self-destructive behaviors, they reveal themselves to be like a dog returning to its vomit or a pig going back to its muck. They attack and tear apart the holy thing that you would give them, they trample under foot the pearls of your counsel and attack you for your efforts.

Jesus of course is not making this up. He is tracking with the wisdom of Solomon. Proverbs is filled with statements like this. For example, Prov. 9:7-8 says *"He who corrects a scoffer gets shame for himself, and he who rebukes a wicked man only harms himself. Do not correct a scoffer, lest he hate you;"*

This is the person that Christ our Lord is speaking about here.

So, the Lord is instructing his disciples to not waste any more of their time with those who are scoffers and mockers. If a person does not heed your godly counsel and instruction, if they continue to ignore you and make their own life miserable, if they, like a dog goes back to its vomit and like a hog goes back to wallow in its mire, there is no reason for you to join them in their self-imposed misery.

They will only attack you for your reproof and bring you down with them.

As George Bernard Shaw said – *“Don’t wrestle with pigs. You’ll both get dirty, and the pig likes it.”* People who are like that, are literally not worth the time, effort, or energy. That may sound harsh, but it’s true.

But thanks be to God, that is not all people. Proverbs 9 continues and says: *“rebuke a wise man, and he will love you. Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a just man, and he will increase in learning.”*

Prov. 15:31-32 likewise says: *“The ear that hears the rebukes of life will abide among the wise, He who disdains instruction despises his own soul, but he who heeds rebukes gets understanding.”*

So, the command that Jesus gives here is to not waste your time and energy and resources on those who do not appreciate the value and worth of them. But give your time, effort, energy and resources to those who are worthy and wise.

We see examples of this principle in action when Jesus sent out the twelve disciples to preach the gospel of the kingdom in Matt. 10: <sup>11</sup>“Now whatever city or town you enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and stay there till you go out. <sup>12</sup>And when you go into a household, greet it. <sup>13</sup>If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. <sup>14</sup>And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet. <sup>15</sup>Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!”

There were those who showed themselves worthy of the pearl of great price by receiving the apostles and their words. But there were also those who were not worthy, because they did not receive the apostles' words.

This same thing happened to Paul in Acts 13:

*<sup>44</sup> On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God. <sup>45</sup> But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul. <sup>46</sup> Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. <sup>47</sup> For so the Lord has commanded us:*

*'I have set you as a light to the Gentiles,  
That you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.'* "

*<sup>48</sup> Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.*

*<sup>49</sup> And the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region. <sup>50</sup> But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region. <sup>51</sup> But they shook off the dust from their feet against them, and came to Iconium. <sup>52</sup> And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.*

Interestingly, we see a reversal taking place in the covenant people of God. The once unclean Gentile dogs and pigs who were once outsiders to the covenant, were brought near and made clean by

faith in Jesus Christ. While the Jews rendered themselves unclean, making themselves outsiders to the covenant by rejecting faith in Christ. They rejected the pearl of great price and turned and attacked the Apostles, just as Christ predicted. And so, in obedience to the Lord, they shook the dust off their feet.

My main point here is that the Apostles spent their time and energy, efforts and resources on those people which were most worthwhile and productive. They didn't let themselves get distracted by those who mocked them and were hostile to them. They didn't allow the people who were trying to sabotage them take up their time and energy. Rather they gave their time and attention to those who wanted to listen and learn.

This is actually important when you are having problems as a family, or at work, or in Church, or in other institutions. The way you hold everything up and stop the people from being productive and make everyone filled with anxiety, is by focusing too much on the problem people.

You can get more positive change in a family or organization by working with the people who are worthy, working with those who are motivated and who want to see things change. It is a fool's errand to motivate the unmotivated, and to cast pearls before the hogs. Stop giving attention to the problem people, and instead focus on moving forward with those who want to. And you will.

Not only should you not give what is holy to dogs, or cast your pearls before the hogs, what you should also take away is: do not be a dog or a hog yourself. Learn to receive correction and be wise.

"The wise man or woman, when they receive a rebuke, will not dare to attack the person bringing it. They will never reject appeals

to their conscience from their fellow believer who is concerned for their soul. The wise man or woman, will feel bound to listen to them, no matter how unwelcome the voice is that speaks to them.

“Do you desire to be free from faults? Should you not therefore be thankful to those who show them to you? If you love goodness, you ought to love those whose advice will you to remove the greatest hindrances to attaining it. If you hate sin as the disease of the soul, you would be wise to accept reproof as a medicine, and you ought to treat the reprover as a most valuable physician.”<sup>2</sup>

In short, don't be a scoffer or a mocker. Don't disdain instruction and despise your own soul. Humble yourself and listen to those who are trying to help. Do not be wise in your own eyes.

If you think yourself wiser than those who are giving you correction, then certainly at some point along the way you need to ask yourself, if you are so wise and you don't need anyone's instruction, then why isn't it working in your own life? Why are you constantly in the muck and mire of sin? Why is your supposed wisdom and righteousness not producing the fruit you desire? And it is usually at that time that more and more blame shifting takes place.

Now I understand that honest self-assessment is difficult to do. And honest rebukes from your friends can be even harder to hear. And they can even hurt at times. But they are most necessary to grow in the grace and knowledge and love of the Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful are the wounds of friend, after all.

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<sup>2</sup> The Pulpit Commentary, Proverbs, 186.



Prov. 15:33 - *The fear of the LORD is instruction in wisdom, and humility comes before honor.*

When I was in seminary, I had to undergo an exercise in which I had to sit down a few of my close class mates, and later on also with other in my family and those who know me well, and I had to ask them to tell me what they saw were my faults and shortcomings. And I had to sit there and take it and not defend myself. That was a difficult thing to do, but it was most needful, and extremely rewarding.

I suggest that all of you go through something like that in your life. Learn to not think too highly of yourself, be humble enough to receive counsel and honest loving criticism from your brothers and sisters in Christ. And when you hear it, do not spurn the pearls of wisdom God has granted to them to give to you. And do not attack them for their efforts. But also,– learn to identify the dogs and hogs, and do not give what is holy to the dogs, and do not cast your pearls before the hogs. You will only be attacked for your efforts. This indeed is a most difficult endeavor to get right. May the Lord grant us all wisdom to know when to give correction, and how to receive it. In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and the of the Holy Spirit. Amen.