

“Do Unto Others”

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1 John 4:1-12
Matthew 7:1-23

Let us pray... O God,
Help us to listen to those verses of your Word that are familiar to us
yet hear them in a new way.
Help us to agree on what the challenges are before us
even when we don't agree about how to solve them.
Help us to be patient with one another's suggestions in the process.

Amen

This is the third and concluding part
of our sermon series about Jesus' Sermon on The Mount –
which actually has the classic outline for a “3 point sermon”.

My synopsis of its themes goes like this:

*You have heard that it was said, ‘One Way’,
but I say to you, ‘God is still speaking’;
So, don't pray, donate, serve just for show,
because God is with you wherever you go;
Therefore, do unto others as you would have them do unto you –
or else!*

The first part is an interpretation of the past.

Jesus re-examined some of the commandments and popular wisdom
passed down from Jewish antiquity, by saying,
“You've heard it was said... but I say to you...”
as if to unpack and reapply them.

The second part is concerned about the present

as Jesus warned against hypocrisy or just going through the motions
of religious observances;

But he also encouraged us to make room for God's presence
by giving us the Lord's Prayer as an example for how to talk to God
and by telling us to trust God more and not worry.

In the third part,

the future is anticipated as a time of judgment and reward
with the core lesson being the Golden Rule...

It begins with a verse on judgment that is traditionally translated as,

Judge not, that you be not judged,
but this whole section is all about judgment –
and the kind of judgment we should be doing...

Willard, p.2

Rather than “Judge not”, we are guided in how we must judge –
or rather be discerning.

It is “prejudgment” – or “prejudice” that we must not do
as a veiled attempt to find a scapegoat.

Likewise, we are challenged to consider how we evaluate others –
by asking whether we could endure the same scrutiny,
and to recognize there is a level of scrutiny that
otherwise obscures what’s really important.

Are we willing to endure the same measuring stick we use on others
for justice or mercy, when it is applied to our lives?

The option for forgiveness is implied as an important standard for judgment.
Noticing faults – *for the sake of helping others*
is a good application for the attention to detail.

The Golden Rule is in the middle of this final section
of the Sermon on The Mount.

Practicing the Golden Rule means entering a narrow gate to a noble path
for a journey that is difficult and rewarding.

It is a summary of the Law of Moses, the Prophets’ teachings,
the ‘will of God’ – the Law of Love.

This path has a narrow gate to enter and can be difficult to faithfully follow –
not everybody is happy in life, yet still have a fulfilled life.
Jesus is saying we could make it a lot easier on ourselves.

Some people become bitter and hardened about life,
who then choose the ‘wide and easy way’ at other people’s expense.

These are the ‘false prophets’ Jesus warned against
as those who do choose to abuse the privilege of trust –
hyenas and swine, wolves in sheep’s clothing,
crabapple trees, rotten trees,
those who never really knew the Spirit of Christ
as being those whom Christ wouldn’t ‘know’,
like the foolish person who neglectfully builds a house upon sand...

The Sermon on The Mount ends on a dire note
for those who don’t take his words seriously:

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you –or else!

Yet the hopeful message of living a life of love is a common thread
throughout Jesus message beginning with the introductory bridge:

*“...those who practice as well as preach, the Law of Lovingkindness
will be considered a giant in that Beloved Community of Heaven.”*

Do the loving thing – it is its own reward, now and in the time to come.

Amen

*Our lesson from 1 John 4:1-12 is all about love as a way of knowing
who is part of the community of God's people – and who is not,
with love as a kind of litmus test for discernment...*

¹ Dear friends,

don't believe everyone who claims to have the Spirit of God.

Test them all to find out if they really do come from God.

Many false prophets have already gone out into the world,

² and you can know which ones come from God.

His Spirit says that Jesus Christ had a truly human body.

³ But when someone doesn't say this about Jesus,

you know that person has a spirit that doesn't come from God

and is the enemy of Christ.

You knew that this enemy was coming into the world

and now is already here.

⁴ Children, you belong to God, and you have defeated these enemies.

God's Spirit is in you and is more powerful

than the one that is in the world.

⁵ These enemies belong to this world,

and the world listens to them, because they speak its language.

⁶ We belong to God,

and everyone who knows God will listen to us.

But the people who don't know God won't listen to us.

That is how we can tell the Spirit that speaks the truth

from the one that tells lies.

⁷ My dear friends, we must love each other.

Love comes from God, and when we love each other,

it shows that we have been given new life.

We are now God's children, and we know him.

⁸ God is love, and anyone who doesn't love others has never known him.

⁹ God showed his love for us when he sent his only Son

into the world to give us life.

¹⁰ Real love isn't our love for God, but his love for us.

God sent his Son to be the sacrifice by which our sins are forgiven.

¹¹ Dear friends, since God loved us this much, we must love each other.

¹² No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us,

and his love is truly in our hearts.

Let us be challenged and guided by these words...

Matthew 7:1-29

- ¹ “Judge not,
that you be not judged.
- ² For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged,
and the measure you give will be the measure you get.
- ³ Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye,
but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?
- ⁴ Or how can you say to your brother,
‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’
when there is the log in your own eye?
- ⁵ You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye,
and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.
- ⁶ “Do not give dogs what is holy; and do not throw your pearls before swine,
lest they trample them under foot and turn to attack you.
- ⁷ “Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find;
knock, and it will be opened to you.
- ⁸ For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds,
and to him who knocks it will be opened.
- ⁹ Or what man of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone?
¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent?
- ¹¹ If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children,
how much more will your Father who is in heaven
give good things to those who ask him!
- ¹² So whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them;
for this is the law and the prophets.
- ¹³ “Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy,
that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many.
- ¹⁴ For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life,
and those who find it are few.
- ¹⁵ “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing
but inwardly are ravenous wolves.
- ¹⁶ You will know them by their fruits.
Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles?
- ¹⁷ So, every sound tree bears good fruit,
but the bad tree bears evil fruit.
- ¹⁸ A sound tree cannot bear evil fruit,
nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.
- ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit
is cut down and thrown into the fire.
²⁰ Thus you will know them by their fruits.
- ²¹ “Not every one who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’
shall enter the kingdom of heaven,
but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.
- ²² On that day many will say to me,
‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name,
and cast out demons in your name,
and do many mighty works in your name?’
- ²³ And then will I declare to them,
‘I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers.’

²⁴ “Every one then who hears these words of mine and does them
will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock;
²⁵ and the rain fell, and the floods came,
and the winds blew and beat upon that house,
but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock.
²⁶ And every one who hears these words of mine and does not do them
will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand;
²⁷ and the rain fell, and the floods came,
and the winds blew and beat against that house,
and it fell; and great was the fall of it.”
²⁸ And when Jesus finished these sayings,
the crowds were astonished at his teaching,
²⁹ for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.