

The Gospel of Matthew

Session 8: Matthew 7 (Choices of the Kingdom Book 1: Discourse Sermon on the Mount

NEXT WEEK: Main Readings: Matthew 8: The Kings Power Demonstrated **Additional Readings:**

1Kings 19:19-21 CCC: None

Review: Third of three chapters on Sermon on the Mount: Chapter 5= raising the bar, calling us to New Covenant; Chapter 6 = how to live a life of Personal Piety; Chapter 7 = Judging, prayer, golden rule, choices; remember Jesus is new Moses, went up to the mountain and gave us New Covenant, new laws

NOTES AND QUOTES

1. Matt 7:1-6 – warns us about judging others mainly in ordinary life; we set ourselves up as *moral guardians* and critics of other people; Jesus is the judge, not us; references Matt 5:20 – “... if your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees (created the *moral climate*), you will not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”
2. Difference between *judging* and *prudence*¹ – Mat 6:37 “Judge not and you will not be judged; condemn not and you will not be condemned; forgive and you will be forgiven...”; the measuring stick we use will be lined up against us to measure us – you will get what you give; we must always examine our hearts *first*
3. *Critical discernment*² – St Augustine “ ...try to acquire those virtues which you think your brother’s lack and you will no longer see their defects because you do not have them yourself.”
4. In order to help another on his journey, need to know where he is on that faith journey; need to lay a foundation of basics first – not judge but discern their need to know
5. Prayer – 4th Pillar of the Church; important to know how to pray in filial³ adherence to God and with filial boldness⁴; Our Father is concerned even with everyday things, unlike Muslims who see God through eyes of Abraham’s slave son, Ishmael – Muslims see God as slave master; Judaism/Christianity view God through eyes of son of Sarah as loving father.
6. Golden Rule – moral lesson is the love of our Heavenly Father; Jesus has given us a better way to live but all comes down to two choices, two ways to live and likens to two gates – one is large and accommodating (leads to death – beware of false prophets who lead you astray); the other is very narrow and requires strict adherence to rules and is tough to get through (leads to eternal life – look for the fruit)
7. Deut 30: 15-20 – the choice between Israel (and us) Moses said to the Israelites before they were to enter the Promised Land - “¹⁵Here, then, I have today set before your life and prosperity, death and doom.¹⁶If you obey the commandments of the Lord, your God, which I enjoin on you today, loving Him, and walking in His ways, and keeping His commandments, statutes and decrees, you will live and grow numerous, and the Lord, your God, will bless you in the land you are entering to occupy.¹⁷If, however, you turn away your hearts and will not listen, but are led astray and adore and serve other gods,¹⁸I tell you now that you will certainly perish; you will not have a long life in the land which you are crossing the Jordan to enter and occupy. ¹⁹I call heaven and earth today to witness against you; I have set before your life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live, ²⁰by loving the Lord, your God, heeding His voice, and holding fast to Him. For that will mean life for you, a long life for you to live on the land which the Lord swore He would give to your fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.”
8. Moral decisions are important for our salvation; beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing; anyone who separates you from the Magisterium of the Church is a false prophet; Obedience to Jesus is like a wise man is one who builds his house upon a rock; Herod’s temple not built on rock of Christ and was destroyed; Jesus’ house (the Church) is built on the rock of Peter (Matt 16; Dan 7)
9. James 1:14-16 states to build your house upon the Rock of Jesus through faith and works, be obedient to Jesus’ teaching, know what He taught, carry out His will, don’t follow false prophets; someday we will be judged on the content of Jesus’ message and how we obeyed; Faith without works is dead

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Additional Reading: James⁵ 3:1 – 26

¹ Prudence

1: the ability to govern and discipline oneself by the use of reason

2: sagacity or shrewdness in the management of affairs

3: skill and good judgment in the use of resources

4: caution or circumspection as to danger or risk

Counsel is the crucial first aspect of prudence. But no matter how much one gathers information and thinks through a decision, unless he makes a good judgment and acts on it, he does not have the virtue of prudence.

² *Critical discernment* - the ability to notice the fine-point details, the ability to judge something well or the ability to understand and comprehend something. Noticing the distinctive details in a painting and understanding what makes art good and bad is an example of **discernment**.

³ *Filial*: relating to or befitting a son or daughter: (*filial* obedience, *filial* love); having or assuming the relation of a child or offspring. (The new village has a *filial* relationship with the original settlement.)

⁴ *Filial Boldness* - Practical application: Pray with filial boldness

<https://www.doctrinalhomilyoutlines.com/2017/08/pray-filial-boldness-twentieth-sunday-ordinary-time/>

- Christ gives us permission to petition God with filial boldness.
- Prayer of petition is informing God what we want so he can give it to us. This means that we can ask God for anything with a faith that refuses to doubt. Of course, we cannot ask for something evil or bad for us and expect to be heard. We also cannot expect that we will get what we ask for according to our schedule, but we can certainly pray that way. We will eventually get everything in heaven if we make it there.
- Likewise, we can make acts of thanksgiving with filial boldness. This means we can thank Him for anything that is not sinful. There are many humble things we can be thankful for that we would not say aloud, but God is pleased with this gratitude.
- Prayer of reparation or atonement can also be made with filial boldness. A humble child with confidence in his or her parents would not be afraid to name what he has done, no matter how embarrassing. We can also boldly express sorrow to God for all the evils we see around us.
- Finally, we can boldly adore God. I think this boldness is mostly necessary when we are with or around other people. It can take courage to make the sign of the cross when passing a Church, or to pray a Hail Mary aloud when passing an accident scene, or to genuflect before the Blessed Sacrament.

⁵ *The Letter of James* – identified as a *slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ*; thought to be relative of Jesus who is usually called the “brother of the Lord” (Mat 13, 55; Mk 6, 3). He was leader of the Jesus Christian community in Jerusalem whom Paul acknowledged as one of the pillars” (Gal 2, 9). In ACTS, he appears as the authorized spokesman for the Jewish Christian position in the early Church (ACTS 12, 17; 15, 13-21). According to Jewish historian Josephus, he was stoned to death by the Jews under the high priest Ananias II in A.D. 62; Letter is addressed to “the twelve tribes in the dispersion” (the people of Israel)

Main divisions of the Letter

1. Address (1:1)

2. The Value of Trials and Temptation (1, 2-18)

3. Exhortations and Warnings (1, 19-5, 12)

4. The Power of Prayer (5, 13 – 20)