

Matthew 19-09-08b

Let's resume our study now in Matthew chapter 7 and we get the idea now that we really have to examine ourselves before we take upon us the serious but necessary function of discernment. We can discern but we do not punish. That's it in a nutshell.

You must discern. You've got to figure out what's right and what's wrong, who is doing what's right and who is not. Some people you embrace, some people you try to save from the fire, hating the garment spotted by the flesh, being careful that you aren't dragged down.

There's a lot of discernment that is rightly and properly and necessarily done but the one thing we are forbidden to do and remember this is a present active imperative which means stop doing something that is currently taking place and that is punishing people that we deem to be on the outs in some way. You do not have the authority, you have not been assigned the function that belongs to God of determining and perpetrating consequences. Consequences are strictly our own behavior.

We may need to put distance, we may need to ask someone to leave but you don't kick the door into them on their way out. You don't try to engage in punishment and the standard if you have any question about this is if the roles were reversed how would I like to be treated? What would I appreciate? What would I think is fair? And you can't say well if I had done what that rascal did I would just deserve the worst treatment possible. We all, it's it's the golden rule in a slightly different form.

Judge the way you hope to be judged and there are judgments in time and there's judgments after time. God whom the Lord loves he chastens and he scourges every son whom he receives and we have consequences in time and what are they designed for? The same thing consequences in the church are designed for that that that by making someone realize that they have offended or they have put themselves in a position where fellowship is no longer possible hopefully that will help them realize that they need to turn and they need to change. Well if you've been ugly and you've been hyper judgmental and you've been hyper critical how easy is the path of change of mind going to be if well I realize I did wrong but you know that was uncalled for I I don't want to go back to a group that behaves that way.

We should represent God's mercy, God's long-suffering, God's patience and God's reluctance in having to implement measures that put distance between you know your iniquities have separated between you and your God your sins have hit his face from you that he will not hear you remember the glory of God in Ezekiel departing from the temple and he stops at the threshold of the house he stops at the gate he stops at the brow of the Mount of Olives and in essence is looking back hoping that he can return but the people's hearts are not changed and so then the glory of God goes out to the nations but

when it returns it comes back in one swoop all the way from the east to the west and returns later on in Ezekiel we've done that study many times but the story of the prodigal son you think about the attitude of the father toward this son who has bad priorities making poor decisions the father knows in his heart that the guy is going to waste his inheritance but he lets him go and he says you know really if that's your attitude you don't belong in this household anyway so he gives him his inheritance early and lets him go and waste it but what is his attitude and how does the son know that he can return my father is fair look how my father treats his servants if he'll just treat me as well as one of his servants which says something about the father it's it's pointed out from time to time but you think about that one point of the prodigal son story that the father is so just and fair that when the son thinks of him he says you know even the servants my father doesn't kick them around he doesn't abuse them he's not insensitive he's not if I get treated as well as with the servants I'll be I'll be fine but he's a son and fatted calf in the ring and the celebration and this should be our model for discerning creating distance or allowing distance when it's necessary but quick forgiveness abundant forgetting of the past when the object qualifies themselves by acknowledgement so this is what Jesus is getting at here and he says first remove the plank from your own eye then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye then verse 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 to pieces now do not give what is holy do not give what is valuable pearls and another place Jesus is going to talk about the pearl of great price and it's a it's a distilled piece of value and it's easily portable it's beautiful to look at he doesn't use gold he doesn't say don't give gold or silver or precious stones he says a pearl pearls have a unique quality and nature to their value and he says do not give what is holy to the dogs nor cast your pearls before swine now how do you know who are the dogs and who are the hogs you have to discern you have to observe and draw conclusions right and if someone is a dog or a swine what's the very first thing under the law of Moses that you know about them what is their category clean or unclean qualified to be in the holy precincts or not not right dogs are unclean swine are unclean you can't help but think of the legion of demons going off the cliff inside the swine that's birds of a feather flocking together so to speak so what is Jesus saying here in the metaphor he's talking about people this whole section is about people so there are people who in this metaphor are labeled swine and dogs what is that interesting thing about human beings with free will is we choose whether we are holy or unholy we choose whether we are children or dogs we choose whether we are clean or unclean undefiled or defiled corrupt or incorrupt it's we put ourselves in a category most things in life are what they are because that's how it fell out but here people who are dogs what have they done or not done why would they be dogs why would they be like the heathen or like the tax collectors because that is what they have chosen and my favorite example of this real quickly and I can't give you the references off the top of my head but when you go to Romans and in the vicinity of chapter 9 when Paul is talking about vessels of wrath fitted for corruption that fitted

for destruction he says you know there are vessels of wrath then another place I think talking to Timothy and he says people who purify themselves from bad practices can make themselves holy vessels it's a choice and you can't read Romans and talking about well it's all predestined you know God but from the same clay he makes vessels of honor and vessels of dishonor and the vessels of dishonor just hopelessly predestined by God by lack of destiny you know if they don't believe in double predestination they say well God only destined these for glory and by not he didn't predestinate these for destruction he just didn't destinate them for glory so it's sort of a sin of omission and you know if you don't believe in free will you do believe in double predestination whether you like it or not because if there are ten people drowning and you throw three people life preservers well I didn't kill them they drowned seriously you had a stack of two dozen life preservers but you only threw out three because those were the three people you for some inscrutable reason thought ought to be back on the boat so whose fault is it that they drowned if you were eminently able oh who are you to answer back yeah well you know that whole thing but you go to another context where the same author Paul under the same influence of the Holy Spirit is talking about if a young man will cleanse himself from evil practices he will be a vessel of honor fit for use we decide what kind of vessel we are Paul says it and how they can look at the one and not the other I don't know but it's a choice so dogs and hogs is a decision and this is after that decision has been made now you meet somebody don't know them well get into a discussion about spiritual things are they interested do they ask questions or are you kind of having to grab them by the sleeve and say hey I've got another thing to tell you or you know you I can tell by looking at your life you know at least in our mind you really need to hear this or we tell ourselves you know if I could just oh I heard the most wonderful sermon on Sunday I'm gonna get a tape and give it to that person and they need to hear it you know that'll that'll fix them that'll that'll people choose why weren't they there to hear it themselves why aren't they cultivating Bible study and the ministry of the Spirit and you can't be the Holy Spirit and you can't be the Word of God for them you can't throw pages of your Bible at them you can't stick a tract in their back pocket as they're walking away there is certainly information and help and mercy and grace forgiveness cleansing opportunity blessing from God available for everybody but people that are out of that category are there by choice and you can't go flip their chooser you can speak the truth in love but what Jesus says is if somebody has decided to be a dog or they have decided to be a dog don't take that holy information and throw it at them look at this closely see if you pick up the the essential feature of this short little parable do not give what is holy to the dogs why think about how do you know what is holy and what is not how does anybody know what is holy you've got a human brain if I if I took major with me back to the Old Testament and I traipsed in without dying into the holy place and I grabbed some showbread off the table and I had showbread in one hand and I had regular bread in another would major know the difference if I gave him regular bread or gave him showbread do not give what is holy who knows what is holy only people who have a sense of what is holy who can identify what is holy dogs wouldn't know holy if you

preached at him for 12 hours there is no way I can ever communicate to my dog what's holy and what's not I can you know try to educate him on who to bite and who not to bite or you know where to do his business and where not to do his business but he doesn't understand it in terms of holiness does he he understands it in terms of approval or disapproval and consequences are no consequences and there's he learns behaviors but he doesn't do it because well you know really the right thing to do here the holy thing to do would be thus and so holiness is is inscrutable and inconceivable to a dog so if there is someone who doesn't have an ability to understand God's righteousness God's holiness trying to give that to them trying to to help them operate on that basis is a complete waste of time and it is improper the priest were not to take the showbread and run around the camp with it or run around Jerusalem with it it had a place holy things belong in a holy place that's where it happens so do not give what is holy to the dogs and do not cast your pearls before swine there there are some famous anecdotes I think they're probably apocryphal but aborigines and such you know threw away pearls because they couldn't eat them there were guys that came ashore on an island and they were looking for coconuts and looking for food and they ran across a big pile of diamonds and they just cast them aside because they had no value they had no no recognition that you know here's a fortune you could take these diamonds and buy food to last you a millennium but they they don't know what it is that they don't know that it has value somewhere in some context and in the same way here do not cast your pearls before swine here's the essential detail what happens if you do if you give what is holy to the dogs or if you throw your pearls in front of swine and he's really talking about the last feature here cast your pearls before swine picture this now picture the hogs you got let's say four or five hogs you've got a bowl of pearls and so you grab some of these pearls and he says before the swine so you cast them in front of the swine right that's not the picture what does the verse say don't do it lest they trample them under their feet and then do what turn and tear you to pieces what direction are these hogs facing what direction are these dogs facing there they're leaving they're not interested they're not saying you know do you have something really beneficial these hogs are leaving and you're throwing the pearls in front of them they're going to trample them and eventually a few of them are going to hit them on the head and they are going to turn they were leaving they have to turn to tear you to pieces if the hogs are leaving let them go trying to stop them with valuable things in front of their departing path is only going to result in aggravating them and they are going to turn and try to destroy you they will tear you to pieces so what is the discernment that we make here and notice there is there is a difference now in the target of our observation and our our behavior who was it up above with the plank in the moat the plank in the speck whose eye is the speck in your brother this is confraternity this is fellowship this is in like-minded context right this is not don't cast your pearls before your brother who is this this is somebody that is they're creating the distance they have decided to be something contrary and and in a different category from you and you're trying to somehow win them back and change their mind he says don't do it they're leaving they will turn and tear you to pieces so if you're not going to

give what is holy to the dogs and you're not going to cast your pearls before swine the unasked question here is what do you do with them the first assumption is you have in your possession what is holy and you have in your possession pearls they are your pearls what is holy is one thing and then he says cast your pearls you have things of value you have things that are meaningful and helpful and beneficial to you so if you're not going to put them in an improper place what do you do with them share in the area where there is unity of thought where there is like-mindedness where others can enjoy along with you and concentrate on that which is not dogs and that which is not swine those people that have chosen as you have chosen well this you can spend a lot of time thinking about this in joining there is something we need to stop doing here so not passing judgment doesn't mean to fail to discern but it does mean do not try to implement justice and there's one passage later on in Matthew chapter 18 verses 15 through 18 when I alluded to earlier if your brother sins against you go and tell him his fault between you and him alone this is Matthew 18 15 if your brother sins against you and you're talking to him what did you have to figure out hey this guy has sinned and it's against me tell him his fault between you and him alone if he hears you you have gained your brother he doesn't say go to the dogs and swine and tell them their faults this has implications for to what extent do you try to pursue social justice what effect should the church have on society and this sort of thing whatever you want to say about that this is not that this is in the fellowship this is your brother if your brother sins against you 1815 tell him his fault between you and him alone privacy no outside pressure no humiliation no subjectivity involved with there being other people if he hears you you've gained your brother if he will not hear take with you one or two more one or two more that quote by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established what this does is if this person thinks that there's something wrong with you you've got one or two others who affirm no we agree that it's in this dispute it's you that is at fault if he thinks you've messed up he can get one or two and and come back and talk to you but you begin you try to establish objectivity with the presence of others if he refuses to hear them verse 17 tell it to the ecclesia to the assembly this is the entire fellowship of brethren this of course includes you know everybody there regardless of their gender tell it to the ecclesia to the group if he refuses even to hear the group let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector and then verse 18 assuredly I say to you this is 1818 of Matthew whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven do you bind or do you lose that is a judgment call that's creno that's shafat when we get to 18 we'll cover this in more detail but just be aware you have got to make judgment calls the do not judge has everything to do with do you want to suffer the kind of consequences you're willing to inflict on someone else or do you want the grace and mercy leniency and reluctance to make a distance and make a separation which do you want well use that as the standard for how you implement this discernment but you have to know who the dogs and who the swine are that brings us to verse 7 in this next section 7 through 12 ask and it will be given to you seek and you will find knock and it will be opened to you for everyone who asks receives and he who seeks

finds and to him who knocks it will be opened or what man is there among you who if his son asks for bread will give him a stone or if he asks for a fish will he give him a serpent if you then being 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 now wouldn't it be great if you could just take verse 7 out of context ask and it shall be given Lord I could sure use a new pickup truck seek and you shall find Lord I love to find a buried pirate horde of gold bars on my property knock and the door will be open I'd really like to be this or I'd like to go here or I'd like to enter into this wonderful opportunity Lord I'm knocking on that door open this door of opportunity so that I can you know be the best that ever was or do this wonderful thing there is a context right and the key here is in verse 11 you give good gifts to your children and your father in heaven gives good things to those who ask him so what narrows limits and qualifies ask seek and knock can you ask seek a knock for any old thing what does the context say when you ask for a good thing when you seek a good thing when you are knocking on a good door not just any old thing so how do you know what's good and what's not good what did we just see in the first six verses you have to discern Paul says I pray that you will come to know the difference that you can judge the better things judge between good better and best in the I think it's the first chapter of Galatians I want to be sure I get that right the first chapter one of these books but he says I pray that you will come to know the better things maybe it's Philippians I'll find that later but you've got to discern you have to know good better and best and he says I pray that you will come to know ta differenta in Greek and you've got to know the difference and that requires discernment so when you're going to ask God for something how do you know it's good somebody is sick somebody is injured somebody is diagnosed with something awful I'm going to ask I'm going to seek I'm going to knock on that person's behalf you yourself facing some tremendous difficulty I'm going to ask seek and knock are you just going to say oh Lord I know what is good and good is total healing complete recovery unqualified a hundred percent remission so I'm asking and I know that would be a good thing well how do you know have you spent time thinking about God's good the genuine Agathos you think about Romans 8:28 all things work together for good how is it a period all things work together for good no all things work together for good to those who love God and to those who understand appreciate and have entered into God's calling according to his purpose all things work together for good to those who love God and be who are called according to his purpose many are called if you are chosen who are chosen the ones who enter into that call who understand it who value it who appreciate it who follow it who answer it many are called are you one of those chosen all things work together for good so if you're going to ask you've got to figure out what is the good so in a health diagnosis situation what is the good it's never good you wouldn't want wish some of these things on your worst enemy they're terrible afflictions that come to us in a fallen world so how do you pray here's a loved one how do you pray can you pray Oh Lord heal Oh Lord you know this and the other what is the good well from God's perspective what could be going on in this situation why would he allow something through the wall of fire why

would he allow this challenge and this test and this area of suffering in the first place why does God generally allow suffering why does he allow incursions what does he typically do with things like that does he manifest his power does he reflect his glory does he give people a chance to demonstrate their faith and to themselves reflect God's glory and to be a light that shines you know how many times have you heard that somebody was in the hospital you go to visit them because you're going to cheer them up but they are so spiritually strong that you're the one that comes away blessed and encouraged and strengthened and you say you know I went to try to hold them up well they've they've imparted strength to me that I thought they needed I turned out to be the one that needed it I needed the comfort and encouragement I needed the viewpoint I needed the the perspective and the spiritual strength that they've got and I'm the one who got blessed so is that ever bad is it ever bad that God's glory is reflected is it ever bad that God demonstrates his power and is able to comfort is it ever bad that others see Christ in us that that we are light shining in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation and hospital staff and caretakers and people in the periphery and and more distant relatives see something in us that they don't see anywhere else and they say where do you get that how can you be so uplifting and so uplifted in this circumstance and God through us draws people to himself draws them to Christ and through Christ to himself how does that happen is that something you can pray for is that what God might be up to and if you ask that in the process of that the person who is the who has that opportunity will themselves be blessed and be strengthened and uplifted comforted given peace what does Jesus say what man is there among you if his son asks for bread will give him a stone the son is asking for something beneficial and helpful and nutritious and necessary what father of any stripe would turn that down and you've got to be really shot through with evil to not feed your kid when he's hungry or if he asks for fish will he give him a serpent he's going to give him a stone which will hurt him he's going to give him a which will bite him and fill him with poison it's obvious that when a good proper necessary request is made any loving father is going to be ready willing and able to answer if you being evil know how to give good gifts your children how much more will your father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him so the whole key in asking and seeking and knocking is for us to judge instead of judging others and finding fault what should we be judging what are those good things I can ask and seek and knock about that's where I can judge find the good things spend my time and my wonderful laser beam sense of discernment on good things Lord show me my secret faults try me and see if there be any wicked way in me I want to find that identify give me the strength to overcome it to eliminate it to be a blessing to others do you think that God will not honor that request he's our father in heaven and he will give that good gift because we have asked him so the key is judge what is good ask for what is good seek what is good knock on the good door and God will always answer in the affirmative if you decide in your own mind that there's something wrong with somebody and you're gonna fix it or if you decide that there's some circumstantial outcome that you've decided is going to be the best and you haven't gone to righteousness and you haven't

gone to seeking first the kingdom context context context your prayers are not going to get higher than the popcorn on the ceiling if you still have a popcorn ceiling so that's the big picture here there's a lot I could say about the beautiful way that this is expressed in Greek but this is not hard the this is not a difficulty in understanding or perceiving what Jesus is saying the difficulty is in putting it into practice in holding ourselves to the standard sometimes we've really got to figure out what the text is saying this text is not hard the application is hard the humility to look at myself and say I am the one that needs to stop I am the one that needs to start in these areas and I need to address the plank that's the hard part that's that's the real application so find the plank and get it out and then seek what is good if you get those two things under your belt if we get these things under our belt verses 1 through 12 flow like a crystal clear cool refreshing brook from the fountain of living waters God will give us the strength if you want to be able to do this that's a good thing to ask and seek and knock about it it's sobering because God will answer that prayer and many of us know from experience that sometimes it's a it's like surgery the surgery itself can be kind of traumatic but in the end the result is is a wonderful benefit for ourselves and others well we'll pick up in chapter 7 verse 13 next time but let's close here in a word of prayer father thank you for the preservation of the verbal teaching of the Lord Jesus as we find it in this passage the living word presenting and communicating the living truth we thank you that you've granted us the presence and power of your Holy Spirit to enable us and to strengthen us and to give us the necessary tools to examine ourselves to measure ourselves against the standard of truth and to have the opportunity and the potential to implement your strength and your power for cleansing for strength for growth and for proper function in this life in preparation for the next we pray that as we reflect on these things that our lives will more and more reflect your glory and the glory of our Savior the Lord Jesus Christ we ask these things in his name amen