

Matthew 19-09-22a

Today is September the 22nd, 2019. We continue our study in the Gospel of Matthew, resuming in chapter 7. It's great to see everyone here and looking so refreshed and excited and interested. Got a little bit of a freshen of cool breeze in the air as the incipient autumn season is upon us.

It's hard to believe the summer has already passed me by, but in large measure it has. We'll take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship and on our study, and then we'll begin. Father, we are so grateful for the regular reminders that we have of our eternal identity, the bright future that awaits us, the hope that is a part of our salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank you for him. We thank you for the way that he has lifted us up out of the temporary and the mundane and the ephemeral, and has given to us the life that can only come from you, has related us to you through himself. We are especially grateful to be a part of that special gift of a people that you have given to him, and it gives us a unique identity, unique opportunities, unique resources, and promises in this age.

We thank you for the challenges that you send our way, the difficulties and the hardships, knowing that the testing of our faith is essential to our growth and to our appreciation for just how much we have been delivered from. We thank you for this passage of scripture that is before us, and for our fellow interested believers who are with us as together we seek a better understanding. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will enlighten these truths and impress them on our hearts and give us not only the ability to know what they mean, but also to see their pertinence for ourselves as we move forward in what remains to us of this life.

We pray that in all things the Lord Jesus will be glorified and you will be pleased. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

As I said, we've started a new chapter last time, Matthew chapter 7, and we've seen the first section, judge not that you be not judged, the judgment with which you judge you will be judged, and the measure you use it will be measured back to you. And I mentioned very briefly, perhaps even only in the cavernous spaces of my own mind, that when it says you will be judged and it will be measured, you can tell that this is the passive voice, it's passive in Greek, it's rendered with a passive translation in English, and you can briefly ask yourself the question, well, who is the judge or the measurer? And these are what is known in scriptural studies as divine passives. So the judgment with which you judge, you will be judged, the judge is God in the general sense, and because all authority has been delegated to the Lord Jesus, he is the specific judge, and this is why we talk about the judgment seat of Christ.

We shall all stand before the bema, the seat where judgment is rendered. But I point this

out because we're going to see some more, going to see some more of these divine passives in the the portion of this chapter we take up this morning. And you remember that the illustration here was the log and the speck in the eye, and I just want to say by way of review, why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye but do not consider the plank or beam or log in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, verse four, let me remove the speck from your eye, and look, a plank is in your own eye.

Hypocrite. First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. And you will recall back in chapter six, verse two, we took up this word hypocrite.

It was the first use of it in the gospel of Matthew, therefore the first use in the New Testament. It will occur several times later, but we took some time to see what exactly is a hypocrite. Look at the Greek and it's hypokrites, which is under or behind the mask idea.

And so you are putting on one appearance, but you're really, you know, you're smiling on the face of it, but behind it you're frowning or gnashing your teeth or whatever it may be. But if you recall, we went and looked at what Jesus said in the Aramaic, that was the original of this saying, this teaching Jesus taught and spoke in Aramaic. And that word was Kanef, C-H-A-N-E-P-H, Kanef.

And routinely this is translated or equivalence from Hebrew or Aramaic to Greek as hypocrite, but it doesn't catch the meaning of the original, which is not just that you are appearing one way and thinking another. The idea in Hebrew for Kanef is that you are a corrupter or a defiler of a thing. It's not necessary that it is bad or that there is this distinction between appearance and thought.

We all are polite and we'll sort of whitewash the truth or we'll, you know, gently only pick a portion of the truth to talk about. Now you have a meal and maybe you've got a violent inability to eat green peppers, but somebody didn't know that. They put it in one part of the dish and you can eat the rest of it and brag on the pork chops or on whatever else is a portion of it and just we don't tell the unvarnished truth.

Well, am I being a hypocrite because I'm thinking one thing and saying another? I'm editing the truth. I'm presenting it in a, you know, the news media gets criticized for this regularly and rightly for presenting an edited version. Arguments and debates often do this.

So is that hypocrite? What is the difference? Well, when we go to the meaning behind this, Kanef, this was a wicked man who alienates himself from God by deceptive practice. He's only interested in appearing to be holy, appearing to obey, but the appearance is a deliberate deception with wicked intent. He really has no interest.

He needs to appear interested in the same way that some celebrities will adopt a charity because they need to appear to be selfless when they are, in fact, very self-involved, self-centered and completely disinterested. Their agent or personal assistant will pick a charity. Yeah, fine.

Put my picture on a postcard or whatever. So this is the idea. So when Jesus says hypocrite in chapter seven, he's not just saying you're hypocritical because you've got a flaw and you're busy trying to fix the flaws in others.

They are doing this for the same reason we saw it in chapter six. I really see that you have this problem or this flaw or this misalignment and I'm going to help you fix it. That whole process is motivated by self-interest.

You need to appear wise. You need to appear superior. You need to put somebody down.

This is tearing others down, trying to lift yourself up. There is an evil in the intent of it that goes beyond simple correction. A lot of people say, well, I had the best of intentions.

I just wanted to tell this person that there was tissue paper trailing from their shoe when they came out of the restroom and I had the best of intentions for their behalf. When he says hypocrite, he says this whole process, the intent from the outset was to do something for yourself that is a deception. You're trying to appear to be something that you're not.

Wise when you're not, holy when you're not, better than somebody when you're not. And this additional element is what he's talking about when he says you've got a log in your eye. The log goes not just back to, well, I've also got maybe a different thing that I need to fix.

Why am I telling this person about their small issue when I've got a larger one, perhaps completely unrelated? The log in the eye is the whole attitude of fixing others as a way to represent myself positively as good, righteous, holy, knowledgeable about the Bible. You are excessively interested in the Holy Spirit. Let me impress upon you my scriptural knowledge that signed gifts have ceased or whatever you think it might be.

And that is the evil. It isn't that, well, I also have a bad habit or a corrupt practice. It goes to intent.

Second thing by way of review here on this is when Jesus says, how can you say to your brother, let me remove the speck from your eye and look, a plank is in your own eye. And the word there is doubly significant because it means behold or look. Jesus is saying, look, you have a plank in your eye.

Well, if you have a plank in your eye, it's a little more difficult to look and more about difficulty in getting to a place in our section this morning. But he says, hypocrite, you are

a deceiver and a corruptor. Hypocrite isn't just wearing a mask.

You are a deceiver and you are a corruptor. That's what cuneif means at its core. First, remove the plank from your own eye.

And then you will see clearly and see clearly the word there in Greek is dia blepo. And it means the same if you retroverted into Aramaic, but dia, you know, like diameter is, is you measure through the center of a circle, dia meter. Well, dia blepo means to see through your vision was blocked, but now you can see through what was formerly a hindrance to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

And if you think about this in a shallow way, you say, well, I'll fix my bad habit. And then I can go around, you know, nitpicking at everybody else's bad habits. I just have to be sure that I don't have any that somebody could come back to me and call me a hypocrite.

That's, that's kind of a, an easy way to understand what Jesus is saying. But think about it. If you actually figure out how to remove the log or the plank, if that is a genuine plank removal out of your eye, and you can now see through, you've got objective vision, and you're going to help your brother with a similar issue.

And remember, it always reminds me, I remember I got hit in the face really hard by a basketball when I was in the fifth grade. I was trying to go out for the team. I was awkward, never did make the basketball team.

But I remember at one point, somebody threw me a really hard horizontal pass. And I looked around just in time for it to hit me right in the face. If you've ever been hit in the face, and your face feels like it's four or five times as big.

I actually went to the, to the boy's bathroom and looked in the mirror because I thought my cheek is just as big as a ham now. My lip has got to be the size of a frankfurter. And you could barely tell it was red, but it just felt so much bigger.

When you think about this speck and log, if you have a speck in your eye, it can feel huge. You ever seen one of those pictures where they, they use size to depict the nerve density. And so here's a picture of a human being and you, your eyes are bugging out and your lips and mouth and tongue are really big.

And then other parts of you, like the back of your neck are very small. And there's this really blob-like distorted version of a human based on size equated to nerve density. You only have to see that once for it to stick in your mind.

But keep in mind that what, what is really a log in your eye doesn't have to be very big. It doesn't, it seems like a log. It feels like a plank.

If you've got something in your eye, it can be very small. It can be invisible. You ever tried to find something in somebody else's eye, a piece of a broken contact or a, you know, an eyelash or something that gets in there.

It doesn't have to be big to completely mess you up and distract you and make you very subjective and self-centered and only interested in fixing it. But here's the thing. First, remove the plank from your own eye.

This is a skill and it requires in the spiritual realm, divine insight, divine power, divine enablement, reliance upon those things that bring the power of God into our lives. We've said it many, many times. How does the power of God come into the life of the believer? You say, I want God's power active in my life.

What's the formula? It's just like epoxy. It is the word of God and the spirit of God in equal measure. Too much word, knowledge puffs up.

Too much spirit, you, you can't control the power. You, you don't know where, how it's just like a car going 40 miles an hour and your steering wheels lose. It takes both.

So if you succeed in achieving the elimination of this problem so that you can now see through, you can dia bleppo, you can observe, what is it you're going to be able to help your brother with? You're not, let me give you three steps you can take to stop this bad habit. You're addicted to playing Candy Crush on your phone. I'm going to send you an app that puts up a Bible verse every morning and you go look at that Bible verse instead of playing that, that game.

I still don't know what Candy Crush is. I just found it on yet another device everywhere. It's on my, it's on my Windows laptop.

I look, where did it come from? Anyway. So what are you going to, how are you going to remove this speck? You are going to be able to see clearly and what you're going to share so that you can quote unquote remove the speck, the spiritual truth and the experience of that interaction of the word of God and the spirit of God that is going to enable that person to do for themselves what you have done for yourself or to put yourself in a position for God to do it through his word and through his spirit. We're not actually fixing each other by first fixing ourselves.

We are learning how God fixes us and sharing that with others. But nobody can get the speck out of their own eye. This is why it's great to be married.

It's great to have somebody nearby to say, hey, do you see anything up here? And you, you know, get a little flashlight and a little point of Kleenex or a piece of a, of a Q-tip or something and look around in there. It, it's, it's great to get help, but in the spiritual realm, what you are actually sharing when you can see clearly, why can you see clearly? Because it is the truth of God that is a lamp unto your feet and a light unto your path.

You kind of mix metaphors and it is understanding how God, the Holy Spirit gives us that humility, that objectivity, that insight into the promises and principles and doctrines of the word of God.

That's what the speck removal actually is. But it takes humility to let God first do that operation on us and in us. And then that is something we can share with humility and with love with others.

So this seeing is not, we tend to think it's just seeing the problem. Oh, I see you've got a speck in your eye. But the real seeing is seeing how speck removal works.

And we have to first experience that ourselves. That's the real insight. It's insight versus excite, outward sight.

That's EK sight. So now we pick up this morning in verse seven, ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and it will be open 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? Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them for this is the law and the prophets." Well, extremely familiar saying of the Lord Jesus here.

You also have it in Luke 11 verses nine through 13, where it is almost verbatim. You have the addition of the egg and the scorpion in substitution for one of the elements here, but it's virtually identical. Very well known.

Ask and it shall be given, seek and you will find, knock and it will be open. Notice those passives, like I mentioned in the review of the first part of the chapter, ask and it shall be given. Who is the giver? This would be a divine passive.

Seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you. He doesn't say, ask and you can grab it, seek and you will acquire, knock and you will be able to push the door open. There is action by God, especially implied in the second one, seek and you will find.

This is in the sense of something being revealed. You were seeking, you couldn't find it in your own strength, but it is, Jesus could easily have said, seek and it will be found by you, by divine help. Everyone who asks receives and he who seeks finds and to him who knocks it will be open.

In the same way that you have a shift in the first part of this, when he says, judge not that you be not judged in verse one and verse two, with what judgment you judge, you will be judged, those were second person singulars. That's you. I've said this before, I have one commentary and I forget who publishes it, but I know it's, one of the things that they do in their translation is that we've lost the old English distinction between

thee and thou and you.

Thee and thou marks the singular in the King James. And it's really handy because you say, well, how come sometimes it's thou and sometimes it's you? He doesn't say, let not thine heart be troubled in John 14 one, it's let not your hearts, because it's plural. And when you see you, it routinely and uniformly translates the second person plural.

But in modern English, we use you for singular and you for the plural and you don't really know, helpfully, which it is. So in this one commentary, and I think it's William Hendricks is the commentator. I have to go back and look at that.

But whenever they have the English there, if it's you plural, they put a space between the letters. So if it's a normal you, it's singular. If it's Y space O space you, you know that the plural in Greek or Hebrew is behind it.

And I wish we had that here because in verse three up above, why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye? That's y'all, that's you plural. He shifts in verse three to the second person plural. And this is a characteristic of a group.

This is typical, not just of you singular, but of y'all. And this kind of dynamic really feeds on conversation around the lunch table at work or whatever, whoever the missing member is, they get sharp shot. And why are they this way? And why don't they do that? And the shift to the plural is intentional there because one of the things that feeds this is conversation.

Why do you all look at your brother and talk about the speck and decide that you're going to try to eliminate it? You need to individually look at your own eye and then you'll see clearly. But when you get to verse seven and you have these three imperatives and they are present imperatives. And this means a continual practice.

Keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking. So you have these three different areas that ought to be continuous. And the word of God has a lot to say about persistence in prayer.

So what are you, is this just by vain repetition? That would be the extreme. There is a necessity for bringing things to God. And so what can we legitimately pray for? And if we just keep on asking, oh Lord, new Cadillac, oh Lord, new infinity, oh Lord, new, you know, think of the nicest Lexus.

Oh, let me have a Lexus. That's modest, but nice. So does this mean whatever you ask, if you go to Matthew 21, 22, whatsoever things you ask in prayer, believing you will receive, whatever things you ask in prayer.

And that's in kind of a miraculous context. When we get to chapter 21, we'll see it. And so there is a condition there though.

Whatever you ask, believing you will receive. And I have known people who believed that God was going to miraculously cure terminal cancer or was going to miraculously dissolve a tens of thousands of dollars in debt. And all I have to do is pray.

And I believe, and I think they sincerely believe that God could, that God would, and that God was going to. And when it doesn't happen, what does that do to your faith? So what is he talking about here when he says, keep asking and you will receive, keep seeking and you will find, keep knocking and the door will be open. If I just keep knocking, I want to be a ballet dancer.

It doesn't matter that I'm past 60 and I can't always even crawl under a car successfully, but I want to be a ballet dancer. If I keep knocking, that door will open. Well, first of all, it has been suggested that based on the context, and we go to context immediately, that the quality of humility that allows you to go to God and get your own problems resolved.

And with that experience and with that knowledge, you can be helpful to your brother in speck elimination. And earlier on, judge not that you be not judged to be charitable. And the golden rule that we're going to conclude this section with is what is in view.

Ask for these qualities, seek for this character, knock for opportunities to express Christ-like compassion and love and so on, that that's what's in view based on the context. But this doesn't seem likely to me. So in terms of context, the first thing I do is what does Jesus say elsewhere about request in prayer? So Matthew 18, 19, again, I say to you, if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by my father in heaven.

So this is another aspect where there is, you're back to that second person plural. If you all are asking and agreeing that this is a good thing, my father in heaven will do it for them. You go to John 14, 13 and 14, whatever you ask in my name, remember this is the upper room after 14, one through six, let not your hearts be troubled.

Many mansions by go, I will come again and receive you to myself. We don't know where you're going. Thomas says, how can we know the way? I am the way, the truth and the life, 14, one through six.

Well, after that, a few verses, Jesus says, whatever you ask in my name, talking about after he's gone, that I will do that the father may be glorified in the son. If you ask anything in my name, I will do. Now this is interesting in itself because Jesus consistently uniformly and without exception, and later the apostles do the same, says prayers addressed to the father.

So you don't ask Jesus something in his name, you ask the father in his name. We pray in Jesus name, but he says, whatever you ask the father in my name, that I will do so that the father is glorified in the son. The request goes to the father, the answer and the

execution, we call it the order of execute, not execute like do away with, but in the military, you have the command of preparation and the command of execution.

So you say, platoon, that's the preparatory halt or eyes right. Command of preparation, command of execution. Well, the request goes to the father.

The father gives the task of fulfilling it to the son so that the father is glorified in the son. This is John 14, 13. If you ask anything in my name, I will do it.

The authority for approving the request is with the father. The fulfillment of the request is with the son. It's an interesting truth and it's consistent throughout scripture.

You never find Jesus saying, ask me and I will do it after I'm gone. When you pray, pray this way, our father, etc. And then in John 15, 7, Jesus says, if you abide in me and my words abide in you, you will ask what you desire and it shall be done for you.

It shall be done. What kind of passive is that? You will ask what you desire and it shall be done for you. Who's the doer? Well, what do you know from the previous chapter? The Lord Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, will do it.

That's a divine passive. It will be done for you from the realms of heaven. The father will approve it.

The son will execute it. So once again, what are we talking about here? What does this passage emphasize? Look at the illustration that he gives. What man is there among you who, if his son asks him for bread, notice even in the illustration, it is a son asking the father, not asking an older brother.

He's asking the father. Now, if his son asks him for bread, we'll give him a stone. If you go to the father and say, I'd like some bread, the father isn't going to hand him a stone, nor is the father going to say to an older sibling, give him a rock, let him let him suck on a rock.

That'll take his hunger away. Or if he asks for a fish, but in the illustration, where is the emphasis? Is it on the nature and quality of the request? Or is it on the one who grants the request? What man among you, when asked, will not respond in a beneficial and loving way? So the emphasis here on keep on asking, keep on seeking, and keep on knocking is the faithfulness of God to give us good things. And you see that in verse 11, 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? So the emphasis here is not, was my request proper enough? Or was I holy enough? You find emphasis on these things.

You find emphasis on faith in 21, 22, believing you will receive, the one who trusts will receive. You find agreement that you're not alone in this. You have other believers who

look at this and say, that's a good request.

Let's pray for it together in 18, 19 of Matthew. And you have the highest standard in John 15, 7. If you abide in me, and if my words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. So we have other passages that emphasize different aspects of this, and we need to take them all together so that our prayers are effective.

And proof texting, or just pulling one of these out. Well, I got my wife to agree that we need a hundred thousand bucks. We agree on earth, it will be done for you.

Where's the rest of the witness of scripture? Where is the balance? Where is the other facets? So we're looking at one facet here, when he says, ask and it shall be given, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened. Those divine passives, Jesus is going to move from that indirect reference to heaven and to the father, to a direct reference in verse 11, your father who is in heaven will give good things. And this implicitly edits the request.

Maybe I am asking for my close beloved relative or friend to be healed, but God is going to give good things, good things. Now, when's the last time we saw good things mentioned? You can think back to verse six. 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.

Do not give what is holy. These would be good things. By the way, what is holy is an interesting word.

And there is a theory that there was a misheard word here where what is holy in Hebrew is kadosh, Q-D-S-H, kadosh, kadosh, kodesh. And interestingly, this gets translated into Greek as tahagion, that which is holy, that which is sanctified. But in the same way that we were talking about hypocrite and its roots in Aramaic, the word for ring, like a ring on your finger or a ring in a swine snout or whatever, is the very same consonants in Aramaic.

It's kadoshah. And there's a supposition or a speculation that what Jesus actually said here was, do not give a ring to the dogs or pearls to swine, which kind of enhances the parallel that neither one of them is going to appreciate jewelry the way humans do. You know, what does your dog care for a gold ring? What does a pig care for any kind of jewelry? It doesn't really change the import of it though, which is that the dogs and the swine are not that by birth or by definition in Jesus' illustration here.

If you are giving what is holy or what is valuable or what ought to be appreciated, if you have the capacity to appreciate it, these are people who lack the capacity. And in this case, it is by choice. You think about the similar situation where Jesus is talking about he's come to give sight to the blind and so on.

And the Pharisees come to him afterward and say, are we blind also? And he says, if you were blind, you would have no sin. But because you say we see, your sin remains. That's not congenital blindness on their part.

That's blindness by choice. This is not the Gentiles. People have tried to say, well, you know, Jesus in other places says that the gospel is not to go to the Gentiles or to the outsiders.

You can think about Matthew 10 5 coming up. Jesus sends out the 12 and commands them saying, do not go to the way of the Gentiles and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. Only go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel that he's going to mention in 1524 of this same book, talking to the woman.

I'm saying only the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And so the swine and the dogs don't give the gospel of the kingdom to anybody but Israel has been read into this. But the reaction of the Gentiles or even the Samaritans to the gospel of the kingdom is not going to be this violent turning and tearing and trampling.

They just think, oh, those foolish Israelites still clinging to a lost hope from centuries gone by. This violent reaction of trampling what is holy and tearing the casket of pearls is the response of those who have made a choice to reject and who are actively hostile to it. And they don't, not only do they not want to hear it, not only do they not want to walk away from it, they will turn and destroy it and you or attempt to.

So this is the immediately preceding context. And so when he says, keep asking, keep seeking, keep knocking for everyone. And you have the same thing in verse eight in terms of continuous action.

So the one who keeps on asking here is a present. And the one who seeks is present. And to him who knocks, these are participles, present participles.

You are a person characterized. You are one who regularly asks, who regularly seeks, who has a pattern, a pattern of action. You are a person characterized.

You are one who regularly asks, who regularly seeks, who has a pattern of action. And those are the ones that God is going to give good things. We request by our best lights and our best understanding, we can consult with fellow believers and agree that wouldn't this be a good thing, but it is God who determines what the good thing is.

And we all have had experience of praying for one thing. God answers in a different way, but that turned out to be the better thing. And in our limited sight, we didn't realize that, well, this would be a far more elegant and permanent and glorious solution in terms of reflecting the glory of God and directing attention to him.

So he, just like a child, we don't always know what's best for us when we ask. But if you

are an asker, if you are a seeker, and if you are one who knocks, that is what God looks at. And he tailors his answer in love for benefit and for good.

So that's the main idea here. And this is going to lead us, and it's not terribly complicated, but it's just important to see our responsibility. We saw our responsibility for divine power to be active within us personally in the first part of this chapter.

We have one verse talking about looking at others and not judging them and not giving them what they are hostile to. If they are hostile, don't waste it. It's just going to be corrupted, trampled, and there's going to be an effort to destroy you.

So for those who are positive, we help each other with speck removal based on what we've learned about how God does it. We are charitable in judgment, as we're going to see when we get down here to verse 12. And we are personally related to God in a supplicant mode.

We are ones who ask, we are ones who seek, and we are ones who knock on the door looking for God's good things, his best judgment, his understanding. All of that's fairly straightforward, and it informs and leads up to the golden rule here in verse 12, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the law and the prophets. So all of this is not so much procedure or technique or formula.

It is what kind of people should we strive to be. And when God looks at those who are humble enough to recognize that they need their eyesight improved before they can be used in a ministry or blessing function for others, we need to be blessed, and we need to be ministered to, and we need to be fixed so that God can use us to be a blessing to others. And we should be charitable in our judgments, and we should be reserved in our criticism, and we should be looking primarily to God for those things that appear to be in need.

Let's pause here and take our break. When we come back, we're going to move toward verse 13, enter by the narrow gate. I would love to know how to do this.

I need to know where the narrow gate is. I need to know how to get through it. I'm immediately put in mind of camels and needles.

So am I a camel? How am I going to get through this narrow gate? We'll see that when we come back.