

Bible Study 2022-2023

Class #23

3/14/23

Matthew 7 (Cont)

- **Matthew 7:7-8** *“Ask, and it will be given to you; and to him who knocks it will be open”*
 - There are two issues here: In the **First stage**, it is obvious that God knows what we need, but He wants us to ask for it (it is part of the Father-child relationship)
 - This, however, does not mean that if you ask for a *Ferrari* He will give one to you (that is not how Christian theology works)

Matthew 7 (Cont)

- *St John Climacus* advised that we pray this way:
- First, praise and thank God for who and what He is (our Heavenly Father, your name is holy)
- Then, thank Him for everything He has given to you
 - Thank Him for your clothing, for there are those who have no clothing
 - Thank Him for your house, for there are people who have no house
 - Thank Him for your food in the fridge, for there are people who have no fridge
 - Thank Him for your country ...
 - Thank Him for all the things He has given you

Matthew 7 (Cont)

- Next, we are called to turn to ourselves and look in the mirror where we will see how thankless we have been in our life, and how worthless we are
 - In this stage, we are called to confess our sins (our inadequacies)
 - We reflect on being sorry for not being the son or daughter we are supposed to be
- Finally, we can ask for the things that we **need**
- Father said that usually, by the time we get to the last stage, where we ask for our needs (the *Ferrari*), these needs are going to be slightly different than what we initially wanted to pray for

Matthew 7 (Cont)

- Thus, when we start over, we not only won't ask for a *Ferrari*, we might not even ask for a car!
- Instead, we might thank God for the vehicle we have
- This kind of prayer puts things in their proper order
- After this review, we should ask for things that we believe we need, but then we must always add: "*but not my will but thine be done*" (for this will further your salvation)

Matthew 7 (Cont)

- This is very clear in the **1st Letter of John**, where he says: *“I write this to you who believe in the name of the son of God that you may know that you have eternal life. And this is the confidence which we have in him that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us”* (**1st John 5:13-14**)
 - This means that when our will is united to His will, then we get what we pray for
 - Father recommended the little book *Truthful Surrender to the Divine Providence* by Father Jean Baptiste Saint-Jure, S.J. and St. Claude de la Colombiere, which expands on this idea

Matthew 7 (Cont)

- If you align your will to God's will, then what you are praying for is what God wants
- If you do this, you will always be happy because you will always get what you want
- Thus, what we should want in our prayer life is to do the will of God
- Prayer is not pulling the lever on a slot machine, it is uniting ourselves to God through conversation with Him
- The more we think like Him, the more we will act like Him

Matthew 7 (Cont)

- Father asked what sort of marriage would exist if the spouses never talked to each other?
- He then discussed the relationship he has with different family members, and friends based on communications
- Prayer is a regular conversation with God
- God is our Father, and we are His children (think of what it means to be a parent)

Matthew 7 (Cont)

- Sometimes, we give our children what they ask for, but other times we do not, as it would not be good for them
- Father asked, “how many times do we (acting like little children) scream for ice cream, and God says, “No”
- Then He gives us the things we need, but not necessarily the things we want

Matthew 7 (Cont)

- **Matthew 7:9-12** *“Or what man of you,...for this is the law and the prophets”*
 - Once again, this is a father/son image
 - This means that God will not give us something that we didn't need or would hurt us
 - The word “evil” here is used as a contrast to God who is all “good”
 - Remember, even Jesus asked why the young man called Him “good,” for only God (the Father) is good
 - God is good,(Mark 10:18*; Luke 18:19) but not man (is another Semantic way of speaking)

Matthew 7 (Cont)

- Jesus was not saying that his disciples were evil
- Instead, He was saying, that those who were often evil rather than good (are in contrast to God who only give them the good)
- Further, He was reminding them that if they know how to give good things to their children, wouldn't God know how to give good things to them?
- This, He said, was the fulfillment of the Law and the prophets (Jesus will repeat this phrase often in the Gospels)
- Even Paul will say the same thing

Matthew 7 (Cont)

- This can be seen in the phrase, “love God and your neighbor as you love yourself”
- Father stressed the importance of understanding this concept as it is about fulfilling the Law (not whether or not one ate a ham sandwich)
- The whole purpose of all the Law and the prophets was based on these two principles: Love God and love your neighbor as yourself

Matthew 7 (Cont)

- Again, the Law was like training wheels, or guard rails to keep one from falling away to either the right or the left
- If one is properly balanced, he does not need the handrails to go up or down the stairs
- Thus, the Law and the prophets were intended to keep a person moving in the right direction
- Jesus was not telling them something new here, as this was right out of the “Holiness Code” (**Leviticus 19:2**)
“You must be holy for I the Lord your God am holy”
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Matthew 7 Cont)

- Jesus called them to be perfect for their heavenly Father is perfect
- **Leviticus 19** also called them to love their neighbor as they loved themselves
- It however, did not specifically say who their neighbor was
- Father said, even though **Leviticus** gives a hint about their neighbor, we will get a clearer picture when we look at the story of the Good Samaritan

Matthew 7 (Cont)

- **Matthew 7:13-14** *“Enter by the narrow gate;...that leads to life, and those who find it are few”*
 - Of these two options, one is more difficult than the other
 - Notice, there is no middle ground
 - It is either the narrow gate or the wide gate
 - Since we are moving in time, we cannot avoid traveling along a road that leads to one of these two gates
 - Jesus calls the road, “the way” (**Mark 1, Malachi 3, Isaiah 40**); speak of “the way of the Lord”

Matthew 7 (Cont)

- Jesus will talk about Him being the way to the Father
- He says: “I am the way”
- This could mean that He was referencing **Malachi 3** and **Isaiah 40**, or it could also include **Genesis 34**
- This would mean the way back to the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden
- In any case, the way is going to be a technical term for those who follow the Christian way

Matthew 7 (Cont)

- **Matthew 7:15-20** *“Beware of false prophets,...Thus you will know them by their fruits”*
 - Later, Jesus will condemn the *Pharisees* for not having judged the people of Israel properly
 - Either a tree is good or bad, based on its fruit
 - He asked them if He had been doing what was right or what was wrong
 - He pointed out that He had raised the dead, healed the lepers, and turned prostitutes and tax collectors back to the Law; so He asked them to judge Him by His fruits

Matthew 7 (Cont)

- If the fruit is bad, the tree is bad, but if the fruit is good, the tree is good
- Once again, He called them hypocrites

Matthew 7 (Cont)

- **Matthew 7:21-23** *“Not every one who says to me,...depart from me, you evildoers”*
 - The phrase, “Does the will of my father” comes from **Deuteronomy 31:12**, where Moses says that salvation must be about the “doing of the Law”
 - Jesus speaks of this as well
 - The “workers of iniquity” were the lawless workers who failed to keep the Torah
 - The “Law” that Jesus was speaking about is clarified in the next verse

Matthew 7 (Cont)

- **Matthew 7:24-27** *“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon a rock,...and great was the fall of it”*
 - Jesus was talking about His words
 - We have already seen how the Lord used the phrase, “You have heard it said, **but I say to you**”
 - Father reminded us that this is still a part of the Sermon on the Mount
 - At this point, Jesus is bringing his sermon to its conclusion

Matthew 7 (Cont)

- Father said that we should hear Solomon's imagery here, as he built the temple on the rock
- Thus, the words of Jesus were like a foundation upon which His hearers could build their lives like a wise man
- There is other "rock" imagery in the scriptures such as the "Rock of Mariah," on which the temple was built
- Paul said that the rock from which Israel drank in the wilderness was Christ
- According to Jewish tradition, the rock of the temple was the rock of drinking water, which watered the Jews during their 40 years of wandering in the desert

Matthew 7 (Cont)

- In Paul's view, this was the rock that followed them wherever they went
- When they needed water in the camp, the water came from the rock of Mount Sinai
- Again, Paul said that rock was the Christ (he was speaking typologically)
- Jesus will identify Himself as the rock in other places where he will be depicted as the foundation stone
- John will quote Jesus as saying, "*If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink.*" (**John 7:37**)
- Jesus identified Himself as the rock or foundation stone of the temple from **Ezekiel 47** and **Sirach 24**

Matthew 7 (Cont)

- A scribe was one who repeated what Moses had said
- Jesus says here, you have heard that it was said from the men of old, and then He quoted, “*You shall not commit adultery*”
- But then, He said, “but I say to you,” and this will be something different from what the scribe would have said
- The people listening to this sermon realized that He was teaching as someone who had authority
 - So, they asked, “*Who is this guy, who commands the sea and the wind?*”
 - Throughout the Gospels, we hear this question, “Who is this man?”

Matthew 7 (Cont)

- Father pointed out that the answer will be hinted at throughout the gospels and most importantly at the end
- Father requested that we place a **Roman I** after Jesus' last statement (**Matthew 7:28**) as our first literal marker (remember, the Gospel on Matthew is divided into five parts)
- At this point, we will take a brief look at the parallel text in **Luke**, where he gives the same sermon, but with a different emphasis and wording

Structure of Matthew's Gospel

Narrative about Jesus' Baptism, John the Baptist, Jesus being tested –
Mt 3-4

A. Discourse on Sermon on the Mount – Mt 5-7

Seven beatitudes/blessings

Blessed are the pure of heart for they shall see God

Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be known as
the children of God

Narrative on 10 Miracles – Mt 8-9

B. Discourse to the 12 Apostles on Authority - Mt 10

Narrative on the mysteries of the kingdom – Mt 11-12

**C. Discourse on the Seven Parables – Mt 13 most
important – like meat in a sandwich (bread,
mustard, meat, mustard, bread) – the parables begin
here**

Narrative on the Church, First Fruits of the Kingdom of Heaven –
Mt 14- 17

B' Discourse on the Church to the 12 Apostles – Mt 18

Narrative on the Approaching Advent of the Kingdom of Heaven – Mt
19-22

A' Discourse on the Temple Mount – 23-25

Woe to you blind guides

Woe to you brood of vipers, you children of hell

Matthew 7 (Cont)

- Father briefly discussed the location for the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain
 - We do not know for sure where either sermon was presented
 - We know it was in a hilly location relatively near Capernaum
 - The land near the city, especially toward the south, meet that criteria
 - Today, a beautiful church has been built at the top of one of the many hills overlooking the Sea of Galilee

Matthew 7 (Cont)

- Further, if one walks from the top of the hill identified as the Mount of the Beatitudes toward the sea, it is not a straight descent
- You will descent a bit, then cross a plain, and then climb the next smaller hill
- This means that the Sermon on the Plain may have been given in one of these level places between hill tops
- It is also possible that Jesus gave a version of the Sermon on the Mount in many places

Matthew 7 (Cont)

- Luke's Sermon on the Plain (**Luke 6:20-49**) is much shorter (29 verses) versus Matthew's Sermon on the Mount (110 verses)