

Jesus' Sermon on the Mount Sermon Series

Sermon 26

A Time to Keep Silence

Matthew 7:6 "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 in pieces.

What could Jesus be talking about here? What is the holy thing that should not be given to dogs? Is he talking about something literal? What does He mean about pearls? No one would take a pearl and throw it under a pig's foot. Of course Jesus is talking in figurative language.

Many people misunderstand the Bible because they cannot discern between figurative language and literal language. People tend to only look at things in concrete terms and they miss the meaning.

In the Bible, how is the word "dog" used? In Jesus' day, dogs were scavengers, not domesticated animals. They roamed the streets and were basically wild. They are unclean animals and the Jews looked up them as despicable creatures. You will see the word "dog" used in the Bible to describe this animal.

But we also see a figurative use of the word "dog" in the Bible.

Matthew 15:22-28 And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed." ²³ But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, "Send her away, for she cries out after us." ²⁴ But He answered and said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." ²⁵ Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, help me!" ²⁶ But He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw *it* to the little dogs." ²⁷ And she said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." ²⁸ Then Jesus answered and said to her, "O woman, great *is* your faith! Let it be to you as you desire." And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

The Canaanite woman was a person from a heathen community. When she called out to Jesus He didn't even answer her. This is just how a Jew in Jesus' time would have behaved toward the heathen. They would not even talk with them. Jesus behaved as the Jews behaved in order to teach something to His disciples. The Jews looked upon the heathen, not as people in desperate need of truth and help, but as dogs. Jesus uses this term "dog" here to describe a non-Jew. But when the woman showed a persistent faith, Jesus honored her and praised her faith and healed her daughter. Yes, there are people among the heathen who are searching for truth and the true follower of God will be of service to them. Jesus showed this to His disciples.

So a dog can figuratively be used for someone who is an idolater. But if Jesus is looking to save the heathen and bring them to truth, why would He say that we should not give holy things to them? Shouldn't we share our faith with unbelievers? Of course. Then our mystery is not yet solved. What is Jesus talking about?

Paul wrote:

Philippians 3:2-3 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation! ³
For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,

There were a group of Jews that followed Paul around and taught contrary to him. This group insisted that in order to go to heaven a person must be circumcised. They thought that being circumcised and doing other rules and regulations purchased for them a ticket to heaven. Paul said that these evil workers were dogs.

Jesus said not to put holy things before dogs so they don't trample on them and turn and tear you to pieces. Dogs then would be people who despise the truth and only take what you say to fight with you.

Jesus' statement about dogs is parallel to his statement about pigs.

Matthew 7:6 Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine.

What does the pearl represent? Jesus told a parable about a pearl.

Matthew 13:45-46 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, ⁴⁶ "who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

Those who are seeking eternal life are like a merchant searching for pearls. But when he finds the pearl of great price, he sees value in it above all else. He goes and sells all he has for that pearl. Jesus is that pearl. He has a perfect character which no one else has. He offers this character to you. But in exchange for it you must give up your life. You must abandon your sins and your ways to get this pearl. But if you buy this pearl Christ's character will stand in place of your character in the judgment,. You will be found worthy of eternal life. Christ is your assurance of eternal life.

Have you bought the pearl of great price? Have you exchanged your sinful ways for a life of grace and purity in Christ? I urge you to do that today while the pearl is still available. Someday soon the door of opportunity will close and it will be forever too late. The door may close by your death. Tomorrow is not promised to you. The door may close for you with Jesus' second coming. Then it will be too late. Take Christ into your life today and have peace in your soul about the future.

When a person receives the Spirit of Christ into their being they want to share it with everyone. They are hurt when others make fun of their new found hope, faith and joy. As the new believer shares his or her faith, others want to put it down or publicly despise it. They turn their words around and misrepresent the truth simply to degrade it. These evil workers are dogs and pigs according to Jesus. You don't need to put the truth, the pearl of great price who is Jesus in front of those who only use your words to belittle you.

This requires spiritual discernment. You have become a believer. You share your faith with your family. They reject your words. They argue and fight with you over it. That does not necessarily mean that they are evildoers and dogs and pigs. The Holy Spirit is moving on their hearts. But they do not know what is happening inside them. They only know that they are uncomfortable. So they resist and argue. But God is not finished with them yet. Many people who at first strongly resist the Holy Spirit later become intense followers of Christ. Look at the apostle Paul. Did he not persecute the believers and deliver them to death? Yet his conscience was burning and finally he yielded to Christ and become the greatest preacher the world has ever seen.

But indeed, sometimes there are those who actually are actively against you. They are not satisfied to believe differently than you. When you are silent so as not to create an unnecessary disturbance, they come and pick at you by asking trick questions in order to put down our faith. They are only picking a fight. They are not curious to know the truth. They do not want to learn. They only want to harm. God is not compelling you to share your faith with such persons. Leave them alone. They have no heart to listen. What did Jesus do in front of Pilate?

Jesus had spoken the truth to Pilate. But Pilate had Jesus scourged. Again Pilate comes to Jesus with more questions. But it was not to learn the truth. Jesus didn't answer him then.

There is a time to speak and a time to keep silent (Ecclesiastes 3:7). The Holy Spirit will guide you at such times. But do not feel that you must answer people who are only trying to harm you and belittle your Savior. They are not ready to hear and they take your pearls of truth and slander them. May God give you peace and serenity at such times. Do not raise your voice. Do not become unraveled. A calm dignity at such times is worth more than a thousand words you could say. A calm spirit is a greater power for truth than all the arguments you could put forward. But if you are upset and angry and say mean words in response you do not represent the truth. Pray for the Holy Spirit to come upon you. There was a power that accompanied the first apostles:

Acts 4:13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.

May this power be upon you as well.

