

Handout Lesson 10

The connecting thread that runs through chapter 7 of Matthew’s Gospel is that of relationships. Jesus has taught on a Christian’s character, on his influence in the faith community and in the world, on the responsibility of the Christian to lead a righteous, holy life and on the destructive force of ambition and self-glorification. Now He will concentrate the end of His homily on a Christian’s relationships:

1. Matthew 7:1-5: to our brothers and sisters in the faith community in whom we may discern a “splinter”, and to whom we have a responsibility to help and not to judge.
2. Matthew 7:6: to a group of people designated as “dogs” and “pigs”, who in their animal nature refuse a share in the Kingdom.
3. Matthew 7:7-11: to our heavenly Father to whom we are commanded to pray in confidence.
4. Matthew 7:12: to everyone in general with the “golden rule” as our guide in our attitude and behavior towards them.
5. Matthew 7:13-14: in our relationship with our fellow pilgrims who in this earthly exile enter with us through the Narrow Gate and walk the more difficult and less traveled Narrow Path to heaven.
6. Matthew 7:15-20: in our encounter with false prophets who we are to recognize and avoid.
7. Matthew 7:21-27: and finally in our relationship with Jesus as our Lord and Savior, who’s teaching we are commanded to faithfully commit ourselves and to unswervingly obey.

The promise is expressed in three statements: 1. *everyone who asks receives*, 2. *the one who seeks finds*, and 3. *to the one who knocks, the door will be opened*.

COMMAND:	PROMISE:
1. Ask	<i>everyone who asks receives</i>
2. Seek	<i>the one who seeks finds</i>
3. Knock	<i>to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.</i>

Contrasts in the parable of Matthew 7:9-11: The contrasts are between a stone and a round loaf of bread, between a snake and the scaleless Galilean fish called a *barbut*, and between the unrighteous father and the heavenly Father:

Loaf of bread	Stone
Scaleless Fish	Snake
Heavenly Father	Unrighteous father

This final section of Jesus homily in verses 13-29 is composed of a series of antitheses which contrasts the choice between living in obedience to the teachings of Jesus and going one’s own way:

- The Narrow Gate/Path verses the Broad Path
- The False Prophets verses the True Disciple
- The Wise Man and the House Built upon the Rock verses the House Built on Sand and the Fool.

Matthew 7:13-14: The Narrow Gate and Narrow Path verses the Broad Path:

In this teaching there are 3 definite, inescapable choices each of us must make. The choice between:

- **Two ways or paths:** the hard, less traveled way which is entered through the narrow gate, and the easier, more popular wide path.
- **Two gates:** The gate leading to the easy way or path and the narrow gate leading to the hard way.
- **Two destinations:** Eternal damnation or eternal life.

Contrast between the true prophet and the wolf/false prophet.

True Prophet/disciple	False Prophet
Grapes	Thorn bushes
Figs	Thistles
Good tree/Good fruit	Rotten tree/rotten fruit

Contrasts of the teaching of the two foundations and those who call themselves Disciples:

The Faithful Disciple	The False Disciple
Listens and hears = does the will of God	Does not listen; does not fulfill God's will
Builds on Rock which lasts forever	Builds on sand which collapses

In His call to faithfulness in living the Beatitudes and the expanded teaching that followed which composes the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus identifies the righteous believer who lives the New Covenant Law as one who loves God and exhibits that love by:

- Conforming to the will of God (Mat 5:1, 5, 10, 20; 6:25-34).
- Obedience to God's commands appointed to man in the moral Law of the Sinai Covenant and the love-intensified Law of the New Covenant (Mat 5:17-20; 47-37).
- Faithfulness to the Law as an interior commitment that is expressed in the actions of our lives even when that commitment brings us persecution (Mat 5:10-12; 43-48; 6:33).
- Included in the actions that reflect faithfulness to the Law must be acts of peace, mercy and charity without thought of compensation (Mat 5:7, 9, 15-16; 38-42; 6:1-4).
- Complete obedience to the commands of almsgiving, prayer, self-control, and our Christian responsibility to bring the light of Christ to a world in darkness (Mat 5: 14-16; 5:21-26; 6:2, 5-18; 7:7-11).

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