

DOGS, PIGS, AND THE PEOPLE OF GOD:

A Warning Against Apostasy
Matthew 7:6 4/19/09 a.m. CBC

“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” (Matt 7:6 NKJV).

Central Truth: The failure to take discipleship seriously results in severe judgment by God. This saying warns the disciple against apostasy, the failure to take discipleship seriously.

ENGAGE: There was a little old lady, who every morning, stepped onto her front porch, raised her arms to the sky, and shouted: “PRAISE THE LORD!” One day an atheist moved into the house next door. He became irritated at the little old lady.

Every morning he'd step onto his front porch after her and yell: “THERE IS NO LORD!” Time passed with the two of them carrying on this way every day.

One morning, in the middle of winter, the little old lady stepped onto her front porch and shouted: “**PRAISE THE LORD! Please Lord, I have no food and I am starving, provide for me, oh Lord!**”

The next morning she stepped out onto her porch and there were two huge bags of groceries sitting there. “PRAISE THE LORD!” she cried out. “HE HAS PROVIDED GROCERIES FOR ME!”

The atheist neighbor **jumped out of the hedges** and shouted: “THERE IS NO LORD; I BOUGHT THOSE GROCERIES!!”

The little old lady THREW her arms into the air and shouted: “PRAISE THE LORD! HE HAS PROVIDED ME WITH GROCERIES AND MADE THE DEVIL PAY FOR THEM!”

FOCUS: Have you ever had someone give you a hard time for your Christian witness? Ever had someone scorn and insult you and the gospel message? While God wants us to take the good news of Christ's death and resurrection to all, are we ever right to let people know they are accountable for what they do with the gospel and move on to others?

SET THE STAGE biblically: Today we return to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. (Note setting... characteristics of those who are part of God's kingdom (Matt 5:3-12); case studies of what true righteousness is... inner reality vs. mere outward show (Matt 5:17-6:18).

PREVIEW: I want to help us understand what Jesus means by His proverbial statement to **not give what is holy to dogs, nor what is precious to pigs.** We'll consider two possible interpretations for this verse and applications of how this verse applies to our lives.

ANNOUNCE the passage: Turn with me in your Bibles to Matt 7:6. [p. 854; Include prayer here before people sit down after Scripture reading]

What does Jesus mean when He tells us to not give what is holy to dogs, nor throw our pearls before pigs? Jesus has been talking about not judging. Then after this statement in v. 6 Jesus talks about asking, seeking, and knocking. Sandwiched between Jesus' teaching about not judging and about asking, seeking, and knocking for the wisdom and guidance we need, **Jesus**

gives this warning to us about dogs and pigs. What does Jesus mean? [cf. H. Robinson, *What Jesus Said about Successful Living*, 245-52, for much of this material]

The figure of speech itself is not hard to understand. **Dogs and pigs were despised animals.** The dogs we read about in the Bible were not like the cuddly creatures that jump in our laps to have their heads scratched. They were scavengers, more like wild animals than pets. They roamed the back alleys eating the garbage and human waste.

When Jesus ambiguously pronounces, ‘Don’t give what is sacred to dogs,’ he refers to the meat offered to God in the temple of Jerusalem. While the temple at Jerusalem was a beautiful structure at its center was a slaughterhouse. The Jewish people who came to worship brought animals and sacrificed them to God to show Him they were serious about their sin.

Now at the end of the day not all the sacrificial meat had been consumed, so something had to be done with it. But what were they to do? If they put it in the garbage heap, wild, scavenger dogs would spend the night ripping it apart and eating it. This was unthinkable to them—that meat offered to God on the altar would be consumed by the dirty, vicious dogs that lived off the garbage. To avoid this, the priests took great care to burn the meat and bury it so scavengers would not get it.

Now those who have lived on farms know that when you feed pigs they squeal, push & shove to be first at the food trough; they pay no attention to Miss Manners or Emily Post. If for some insane reason you would feed them rare pearls instead of grain, the pigs would go after it thinking it was something to eat. But when the swine realized the pearls were not grain, they might go after you.

Like the wild, dirty scavenger dogs that roamed Palestine, first century pigs were different from the plump, well-scrubbed **Miss Piggy’s** we think of today. They were half-wild creatures derived from the European wild boar, and they did not sing love songs to Kermit the Frog.

Transition: Knowing this, it is not hard to figure out that **Jesus warns us not to give something sacred and valuable to those who will not recognize or value it.** But what is not so easy to figure out is what all this has to do with everything else Jesus says. Why did Jesus say this here in His sermon? And **when Jesus talks about dogs and pigs, whom does He have in mind?**

Now we get some help from the Bible in the references to dogs and pigs. For example, speaking about the death of Christ a thousand years before the Crucifixion, the psalmist writes: SLIDE: “Wild dogs surround me—a gang of evil men crowd around me; like a lion they pin my hands and feet” (Ps 22:16 NET). [Blank Slide] David, a righteous man being persecuted, foresees our Lord on the cross surrounded by those who, with great delight, pin Him there. David describes these wicked people like a pack of savage dogs, circling, ready to jump, ready to tear their victim apart.

In Phil 3:2, the apostle Paul writes: SLIDE: Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of those who mutilate the flesh! (Phil 3:2 NET). [Blank Slide] Paul likens the false teachers to dogs whom he regards as just as filthy as the wild scavenger dogs encountered in the towns and villages of the first century.

Even more interesting is the discussion of false teachers in **2 Peter 2.** Peter compares false teachers to dogs who return to their vomit and to washed sows who go back to wallowing in mud. SLIDE: For whatever a person succumbs to, to that he is enslaved. ^{2:20} For if after they have escaped the filthy things of the world through the rich knowledge of our Lord and Savior

Jesus Christ, they again get entangled in them and succumb to them, their last state has become worse for them than their first. ^{2:21} For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than, having known it, to turn back from the holy commandment that had been delivered to them. ^{2:22} They are illustrations of this true proverb: “***A dog returns to its own vomit,***” and “A sow, after washing herself, wallows in the mire” (2 Peter 2:19b-22 NET). [Blank Slide] Unless we somehow change the inner nature of a dog or pig, the dog will revert to form and delight in vomit and the pig will thrive on mud baths.

Now apparently the dogs & pigs Jesus calls attention to in this part of His sermon were people opposing Him & His message. In particular dogs and pigs to the Jewish mind symbolized the immorality of Gentile life. SLIDE: “Blessed are those who wash their robes so they can have access to the tree of life and can enter into the city by the gates. ^{22:15} Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the sexually immoral, and the murderers, and the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood!” (Rev 22:14-15 NET). [Blank Slide] **Dogs and pigs then to the Jewish mind were dirty and disgusting, like the immoral life style of pagan society.** (Cf. Bauckham, Jude, 2 Peter, p. 281.)

Trans (& context): “So we are back to our question: How does this sentence about dogs and pigs fit the context of what precedes and follows it? Many commentators say the verse refers to evangelism; that we ought to be discriminating as to whom we tell the Good News about Jesus Christ. We are justified in not continuing to give the gospel to people who will scoff, mock, jeer, and despise it.

There are times when it is wise not to speak, when it is better to let your life say something before your words, to let people hear the music before you sing the lyrics. This is especially true when people are mocking. When Jesus stood before Herod prior to the crucifixion, Herod was eager to interview Jesus. Herod wanted to ask Jesus many questions. Herod hoped Jesus would perform a miracle. But Jesus answered him not a word. Herod was not an ignorant person. He already had more than he was living up to. He simply had a heart of stone, so Jesus refused to answer him.

So there is support for this view from the ministry of Jesus. Jesus did not tell everything he knew to everyone he met. To present God’s truth to mockers who blaspheme and degrade it can be like offering pearls to pigs. So one implication from this passage here in Matt 7:6 (and our first major point) is this:

After sustained rejection and reproach to the gospel, it is appropriate to move on to others.

So in this interpretation Jesus instructs and warns us He does recognize that after sustained rejection & reproach, it is appropriate to move on to others. The “dogs” & “pigs” in this interpretation are people who give clear evidence of rejecting the gospel **with vicious scorn and hardened contempt.**

Jesus later gives His twelve apostles a similar lesson. SLIDE: “And if anyone will not welcome you or listen to your message, shake the dust off your feet as you leave that house or that town. ^{10:15} I tell you the truth, it will be more bearable for the region of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town!” (Matt 10:14-15 NET). Blank SLIDE Shaking *the dust off their feet* was a symbolic gesture that shows that those who rejected Christ’s messengers and message are blameworthy and guilty before God. There comes a time in our

witness to people who show vicious scorn and hardened contempt for the gospel that we are wise to move on to others.

The apostle Paul regularly moved on to others when he experienced ongoing rejection and reproach. SLIDE: So Paul entered the synagogue and spoke out fearlessly for three months, addressing and convincing them about the kingdom of God. ^{19:9} **But when some were stubborn and refused to believe, reviling the Way before the congregation, he left them** and took the disciples with him, addressing them every day in the lecture hall of Tyrannus” (Acts 19:8-9 NET). Blank SLIDE (cf. also Acts 13:36, 50-51; 18:5-7).

Reit & Trans: So, one possible interpretation & a definite application from Jesus’ is this: After sustained rejection & reproach to the gospel, it is appropriate to move on to others. But is there another application to what Jesus says here? Jesus has been warning about judging, and He goes on to talk about prayer. Why would he stick in two sentences to urge us to be careful about whom we evangelize? What does witnessing to those who give sustained rejection and reproach to the gospel have to do with the Sermon on the Mount? There is another direction we can take to interpret (and apply) this verse. It grows out of the broader context of the Sermon on the Mount. **In this view the interpretation of Matt 7:6 goes back to the beginning of chapter 6, where Jesus gives us a model prayer.**

The final petition of the Lord’s prayer is: *“Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one”* (Matt 6:13 NET). **Jesus teaches us to pray to God for protection from sin and from Satan.** Satan is not particularly concerned about whether we commit adultery, murder, lie, or steal. Satan’s mission focuses on anything that separates us from the Father. **Satan wants to use life’s adversities for our downfall.**

As Christians, we are at war. Jesus told Peter, as representative of all the disciples: SLIDE: “Simon, Simon, pay attention! Satan has demanded to have you all, to sift you like wheat, ^{22:32} but I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. When you have turned back, strengthen your brothers” (Luke 22:21-22). [BLANK SLIDE]

Satan wants to separate each of us from God. **In the last petition of the Lord’s prayer, Jesus teaches us then to pray to God for protection from sin and the Evil One.** As commentary on this request Jesus warns, *“Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine”* (Matt 7:6 NKJV). Jesus is concerned that we do not turn our backs on the Lord. **Jesus is concerned that we do not give what is sacred—our lives—to dogs.** Jesus warns us not to take what is precious—our relationship with God—and throw it to pigs who will tear us apart. Jesus makes essentially the same point in Matthew 5, where, after speaking about persecution, He declares: SLIDE: “You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its flavor, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled on by people” (Matt 5:13 NET). [BLANK SLIDE] **What then does Jesus imply by His warning for us to not give what is holy to dogs, and not throw our pearls (that which is precious) before pigs?** A second major lesson from our text is this:

God expects us to take discipleship seriously.

ILL (cf. Robinson, *What Jesus Said About Successful Living*, 245f.): In the 1700s missionaries from the London Missionary Society faced a multitude of obstacles and temptations in the South Pacific. Many of their problems on the island of **Tonga** came from other Europeans, who considered the missionaries a threat to their freewheeling lifestyle. One tactic was to taunt and

mock the missionaries for their sexual purity. **George Veeson**, one of the ten missionaries on Tonga, could not withstand the pressure. He gave in and joined the Europeans in their promiscuous life among the natives. He took land, servants, and a harem of wives. But he did more than that. **He disgraced himself, the London Missionary society, and God.**

“Through the **centuries many apparently committed Christians have turned their backs on God** when their passion for short-term personal pleasure has blinded them to the long-term cost. You and I cannot afford to be halfhearted in our commitment to Christ. We must take our commitment to following Christ seriously. We cannot afford to live partly for ourselves and our pleasures, and partly for the Lord. Why can you not live for the world during the week and for the Lord Sunday? What does it matter if you give yourself over to fulfilling the desires of your flesh?

APPL: For any of us who are tempted to take our lives and sacrifice our future on the altar of the immediate. **Jesus warns here of the great loss and foolishness of giving ourselves over to the lusts of the world.** How tragic to take what is holy and very precious to God—our bodies, for which Christ gave His own life on the cross—and give it over to lusts and the hog pens of this world!!!

You see: **We have been set apart from the world.** In this interpretation, when Jesus refers to what is holy, and to pearls, He refers to our lives and bodies as professing believers. To be holy, means we have been set apart from the world unto God. Paul reminds us: [SLIDE] “Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? ^{6:20} For you were bought at a price. Therefore glorify God with your body” (1 Cor 6:19-20 NET). [BLANK SLIDE] Within **the courtyard of the temple at Jerusalem was a wall.** On this wall were plaques that stated that any Gentile who went beyond that point was subject to death. The Jews were concerned that their temple be kept holy and pure. Here in 1 Cor. 6:19 Paul states that your body, my body, is the temple of the Holy Spirit. When we use our bodies in an immoral or sinful way we defile God’s temple.

Trans: **Why must you and I take our discipleship to Jesus Christ seriously?** God has set us apart from the world. Also, we must take our discipleship seriously because: **We are to be distinct from the world.** Cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:3–8; Romans 12:1–2; 1 Peter 1:13–16; 2:9–12; 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1.

ILL: Earl Radmacher, president emeritus of Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, was asked by ministerial society one time to view a film that blasphemed Christ, and promoted immorality very graphically. Radmacher’s response: **“No, thank you. I am not interested in sticking my head down into the sewer and looking around, so that we can all say, ‘Isn’t this sewer awful.’”**

ILL: We are to distinct from the world. Haddon Robinson, for many years from Dallas Seminary, tells that when he was a **chaplain with the Dallas Cowboys**, one of the team members came to faith in Jesus Christ. Robinson notes that even though professional football is a tough arena to serve Christ in, this man demonstrated a changed life. Several months later the team was in Philadelphia playing the Eagles and a couple of the guys on the team struck a deal with a call girl. They gave her one hundred dollars and said, ‘If you can get that guy to go to bed with you this weekend, we will double it, and you can have anything he gives you.’ Robinson says, “He is happy to report that his friend withstood the tremendous temptation. When he told Robinson

about it he said, “I did not know what was coming off, but they were watching me. They would have ripped me apart if I had gone to bed with that girl.”

Life is not cheap; it is sacred. Let’s remember our bodies belong to God. Let’s live in such a way that Christ is honored by them. The apostle Paul exhorts us: **SLIDE:** “Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God” (Rom 6:13 NLT). [BLANK SLIDE] Don’t offer any part of your body to sin; whether this is your mind, or any other physical part of your body. *** **When we offer any part of our body to sin this is equivalent to giving what is holy to dogs.**

Trans: There’s a third major point I believe Jesus warns us about in Matt 7:6. First, we’ve said that by this proverbial saying by Jesus here in Matt 7:6 He may mean: **After sustained rejection and reproach to the gospel, it is appropriate to move on to others.** Second, we’ve noted that this saying by Jesus can imply: **God expects us to take discipleship seriously.** God sets us apart from the world and expects and helps us to serve Him, not our sinful natures. Now a third major point (related to this second point) is this:

We can expect God’s judgment if we fail to take discipleship seriously.

[Cf. Gal 6:7, “Do not be deceived. God will not be made a fool. For a person will reap what he sows.”] Note Jesus’ warning again in Matt 7:6 [NKJV], “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.**” When you or I fail to take our discipleship seriously, when you or I take what is holy and precious, our body, and give it over to indulge our fleshly lusts, we stand in danger of God’s judgment. Jesus warns that if we give what is holy to dogs **they may turn and tear us to pieces.** If we cast our pearls, what is precious, before pigs **they may trample us under their feet.** While this judgment may come from people, the implication is that it ultimately comes from God.

Trans: Now: **This judgment may be temporal judgment.** [See 1 Cor 5:1–5; 11:27–34; Jer 2:1–19; Isaiah 1:2–28. **Several passages of Scripture warn us about God disciplining His children because of their sin.** For example, to the unrepentant Corinthian man who was having sexual relations with his step-mother, the apostle Paul instructs them to remove the evil person from among them: **SLIDE:** “It is actually reported that sexual immorality exists among you, the kind of immorality that is not permitted even among the Gentiles, so that someone is cohabiting with his father’s wife. ^{5:2} And you are proud! Shouldn’t you have been deeply sorrowful instead and removed the one who did this from among you? ^{5:3} For even though I am absent physically, I am present in spirit. And I have already judged the one who did this, just as though I were present. ^{5:4} When you gather together in the name of our Lord Jesus, and I am with you in spirit, along with the power of our Lord Jesus, ^{5:5} **turn this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.** . . . Remove the evil person from among you” (1 Cor 5:1-5, 13 NET). [BLANK SLIDE] Not only is such discipline needed to hopefully bring the sinning person to repentance, its also needed for the welfare of the church as a whole. (1 Cor 5:6-8.)

Paul, in the context of the Lord’s table (communion) also warns the Corinthian believers about God’s judgment upon some in their congregation who were not dealing with their sin. **SLIDE:** “For this reason, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. ^{11:28} A person should examine himself first, and

in this way let him eat the bread and drink of the cup. ^{11:29} For the one who eats and drinks without careful regard for the body eats and drinks judgment against himself. ^{11:30} That is why many of you are weak and sick, and quite a few are dead. ^{11:31} But if we examined ourselves, we would not be judged. ^{11:32} But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned with the world" (1 Cor 11:27-32 NET). [BLANK SLIDE] Again we are reminded that we can expect God's judgment if we fail to take discipleship seriously. Trans: If we fail to take our commitment to Christ seriously, it may call into question if we really know Christ at all. So while failure to take one's discipleship to Christ seriously may result in temporal judgment, failure to take one's discipleship seriously may indicate that one does not truly know the Lord. Thus: **This judgment may be eternal judgment.**

Judas is perhaps one of the best examples of the failure to heed this verse. He knew the truth, professed faith in the person of Christ, and appeared for years to belong to Christ; yet he eventually gave what had been outwardly consecrated to God (his life) over to evil, and the result was eternal judgment from God upon him. Jesus in His prayer to God the Father the night before His crucifixion prays: SLIDE: "When I was with them [the twelve disciples] I kept them safe and watched over them in your name that you have given me. Not one of them was lost except the one destined for destruction, so that the scripture could be fulfilled" (John 17:12 NET). [BLANK SLIDE] Judas stands as a vivid picture and reminder to us that it's not enough to simply profess faith outwardly as our Lord, God sees our heart and knows if we truly belong to Him. Satan put into Judas' heart the idea of betraying Jesus (cf. John 13:2), and Satan himself entered Judas (13:27). Immediately after this Judas left the company of Jesus and the other disciples and went out into the realm of darkness (13:30)

APPL: Be careful that you do not throw what is holy [i.e., your body] to the dogs [i.e., those who will defile you] by the activities you engage in. If a person who has followed Christ decides to turn his or her back on Christ, we might think that those people who don't know God would say, "Welcome home, friend. We're delighted to have you back." Instead they often tear such a person apart.

ILL (cf. Robinson):. A gifted student went through seminary and became a pastor of two churches that both grew during his ministry. **But then this pastor committed a very serious crime.** He was caught and convicted. When this person went before the judge, the judge said, "**You are supposed to be a Christian. You are despicable. I have only contempt for somebody like you.**" In a letter, this former pastor wrote, "I am despised by the other prisoners who are here. They go out of their way to cut me down because of who I was and what I have done. I am here for ten years. I don't know if I can take it."

This man's experience confirms what Jesus says. The convicts in that penitentiary have committed crimes worse than his. Some of them are in for life. Some serve sentences for murder. But they take great delight in attacking him, like dogs devouring meat, or pigs turning on someone who feeds them pearls.

Now perhaps someone here says, "I hesitate to follow Christ because I'm afraid I will fail to follow through on my commitment to Christ." You fear being the object of ridicule. The truth is, none of us can hold out in our own strength. That's the purpose of our Lord's model prayer to us. We are engaged in a spiritual battle. Evil people will attack us who are being attacked by the Evil One. We can't be victorious in our own strength.

How do we protect ourselves? What can you do to have victory over temptation? **Daily look to God for the strength and help you need (Matthew 7:7–11). The price of victory is constant vigilance.** The longer I am a Christian the more I realize my own frailty and deceitful heart, and my need for a constant dependence on our Father in heaven. Remember, **Jesus teaches us: Look to God for the strength you need to overcome temptation.** Jesus teaches us to look to God for the way of escape from temptation. When Jesus teaches us to pray: “Do not lead us into temptation” (Matt 6:13) this is a request for God to protect us from sin. So the price of victory is constant alertness.

We show our dependency upon God by praying to Him to protect us from sin. Then, knowing how deceitful our heart is, we have a responsibility to not make provision for our flesh. SLIDE: “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to arouse its desires” (Rom 13:14 NET). [BLANK SLIDE] **To make provision for the flesh implies forethought, planning, and activity. In Greek literature outside the New Testament, the term for “make provision” is used of a premeditated crime.**

******Sin seldom just happens; most of the time it is premeditated.** Sin is a link in a chain of events. *When you or I surrender to the lusts of our flesh, it is often not a sudden collapse, but rather the culmination of a process.* **The sins of our flesh are those sins about which we have given much thought, and for which we have made provision.** So, to be victorious over sin and the flesh, we look to God for strength and the help we need, but we also must cease to make provision for that sin we know we are susceptible to.

ILL: I am reminded of the story of an alcoholic who expressed his grief and disappointment about his sin to an evangelist. The alcoholic explained his frequent failings by saying, **“When I pass by that tavern on my way home from work, I go in, and then I later find myself with a hangover.”** When questioned by the evangelist, the alcoholic admitted that the tavern was not on his way home from work at all. He had to go several miles out of his way to pass by it. This man, like us, made provision for the lusts of his flesh, and so he fell.

CONCLUSION: God commits Himself to helping you and me be holy. He commits Himself to making you & me a holy temple (Ephesians 2:19–22). God’s Spirit sets us apart to be God’s holy people (Romans 15:16). **What fills our mind decides largely our degree of holiness (1 Peter 1:13–16; 2:9-12).** Just as a baseball collector would not give a 1954 mint condition Mickey Mantle card to a baby who is teething, so you & I are not to give our bodies over to the passing pleasures of sin to be defiled. Let’s depend on God daily for victory over temptation (Matt. 6:13) and with God’s help let’s not give what is holy [our lives] to dogs [that which will defile us] (Matt. 7:6).

Bow for prayer (and self-examination): Are you guilty of giving what is holy and precious, yourself, your life, over to sin? What are we to do when we realize we have defiled ourselves with sin? What are we to do with the guilt we feel? When sin does occur remember the promise of **1 John 1:9.** “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous, forgiving us our sins and cleansing us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9 NET). [Time of self-examination.] Salvation.