

#141 “Pearls Before Swine”

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After speaking about not judging our neighbor before dealing with the sin in our own hearts lest we become hypocrites, Jesus speaks a very important principle that often gets overlooked. He says in Matthew 7:6, "Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces." Let's take this piece by piece.

First, He says that we are not to give what is holy to dogs. What is holy is anything that is set apart, pure, undefiled, and Christlike rather than worldly. We know God is holy as is His Word, but we are supposed to tell the world, even "dogs," about Christ. So Jesus can't be saying not to share the gospel. So what else could be holy? The answer is the child of God. Positionally God sees those who have trusted in Christ for salvation as holy (Ephesians 2:1-8). Conditionally, we are works in progress until we die (Philippians 2:12); however, since Christ is in us, the world can see His holiness in and through us (2 Corinthians 4:6-7). In fact, they should see this if we want to have any chance at credibly sharing the gospel (Hebrews 12:14). So the idea Jesus is after here is that we don't disrespect ourselves such that we allow ourselves to be given over to destructive, evil entities. There are many who would manipulate us, deceive us, teach us false information, and just suck the very life right out of us (Revelation 22:15). There are people who are encouragers, and there are those who take our energy and hope away. Paul affirms this reality in Philippians 3:2 saying, "Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision." We are not to disrespect ourselves who are the very vessels of Christ by letting others walk all over us, abuse us, or lead us astray. We should not give what is holy to the dogs because we are not dogs but rather children of God. We should love those in the world, but we should not be like it, of it, or darkened and defeated by it. We must maintain our holiness, preach the gospel, stand for truth, and yet all the while we must not let ourselves get weakened, defeated, and confused by errors of practice and thought. We must not let others manipulate or control our emotions, thoughts, or behavior, whether purposefully or not. Only Christ should control us because He is the ultimate example of holiness (2 Corinthians 5:14). Only He is to be our Master.

Yet there is another meaning to this exhortation from our Savior as well. He says that we are not to throw our pearls before swine. Swine eat the leftovers, not the delicacies, and they are content with doing so because they are pigs. That is what pigs do. Dogs eat the crumbs from the table and even things worse, and pigs aren't much better. In fact, pigs love rolling in mud, refuse, and the like. They are stinky, filthy animals. So why would a person give a shiny, valuable jewel to such an animal? It doesn't make any sense, but obviously we must be prone to such foolishness or our Lord wouldn't have had to tell us otherwise. When would we do such a thing? Well, sometimes Christians get burned by their own desire to be "loving," "caring," and "nice." The fact of the matter is that Jesus was much more than just a nice guy who was always there for everybody all the time. The reality is that He had a mission, an agenda, a clear-cut purpose and focus, and a schedule crafted by the will of God. He didn't stop to heal every single person or to cast

out every single demon. Sometimes He left the crowds to pray. Sometimes He went on to another village or town. He knew His time was short and that there were things He needed to do. By implication, there were things that He couldn't do, things to which He had to think and say "no." I have seen well-meaning Christians (and believe me, I have done it many times myself) sacrifice their own well being and even the well being of others who need them in order to "minister" to a person in need. The fact of the matter is that, though we are called to serve and be sacrificial, we are not to give pearls to swine. For example, consider the Christian pastor or counselor who advises a professing brother or sister in the Lord over and over again, yet the person never changes. At what point should he stop and recognize that the person is hard of heart, enjoying the life of the swine? There are limits that we must be willing to seek. Sometimes Satan sets people in our paths in order to destroy us because he knows that we will sacrifice the things we should be doing in order to minister to the "needy" and "weak" one. We must be discerning enough to know when to say when and how to concretely place limits upon people. *Swine don't deserve pearls of wisdom because all they will do with the wise counsel is roll around with it in the mud.* We should always pray for people, and there is never a reason to give up hope. However, there is a time to let a person be and let God deal with them alone. There are many true seekers who need our help, so we need to beware of the impostors, the swine who at first don't seem to be so.

We must learn discernment and who is truly humble, teachable, and willing to learn and change. *Why is this so important? Because the swine do more than just ruin pearls; their purpose is to ruin us.* The swine to whom we keep giving our precious pearls of energy, time, wisdom, and sacrifice are not really interested in the pearls as they profess to be but in, as Jesus says, turning and tearing us to pieces. They were never interested in the truth or in turning from sin but rather in destroying us and feasting upon us. As we function in the church long enough, we will encounter these people. We must be careful and watch out for the swine because our very spiritual, physical, emotional, and financial well-beings are at stake.

Lord, you have sent us out as sheep among wolves. Please enable us to have discernment to know where the ground is fertile and where to sow our seeds. Help us to be shrewd as serpents yet innocent as doves (Matthew 10:16). Protect us, preserve us, and lead us in all wisdom, power, and strength to bear abundant fruit for Your kingdom. In Christ's name, Amen.