

Matthew 7 part 1

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[0 : 00] Well, I can't resist beginning with this.

! Having checked a number of tickets, a train conductor announced,! Everybody, please get out at the next stop, you are on the wrong train. And the passengers looked at each other in amazement. Of course, it was the conductor himself who was on the wrong train.

And I thought that was a lovely little picture of how often we rush to judgment, and our assumption is, of course, that we are right, and everyone else is wrong. But that tickled me, so I thought I would open with that.

So, we're in Matthew 7, and it's definitely a two-session job. Outline for the section, if you want to take notes, or, sorry, an outline for the chapter.

This is what I saw. Verses 1 through 5 is, sort of... Verses 1 through 5 is, I guess you would say it's, be careful how you judge.

[1 : 13] That's my little title for that. Verse 6, then, is, be careful whom you give holy and precious things. And then verse 7 to 11 is, be quick to ask God. And then verse 12 is, the golden rule, the sum of everything.

That's about as far as I'm hoping to get. But as we read on in the chapter, we then see, be careful which gate you enter. We see, be careful of pseudo-prophets, as I like to call it.

That's what the Greek is, pseudo-prophets. And then verse 24 to 27 is, be careful how you build. And I know I've whizzed through those, but that's sort of an outline that we see there, because...

Well, let me step back. Let me step back. So, we're continuing in the Sermon on the Mount, aren't we? Sermon on the Mount. And actually, you know, the Gospel of Matthew contains far more of the words of Christ than any other.

One analyst said that it's 48% the words of Christ. So, not surprising then that we're seeing these big discourses.

[2 : 16] And we began with this one in chapter 5. And here we are in chapter 7, and we're only just coming to the end. By way of a brief recap, if I may, it's declared, it's delivered to disciples on the mountain as they look out over the crowds.

But it's spoken to the disciples. And what we've seen Jesus do is correct the perspective of the disciples on many things. My list for these was, he's corrected their perspective on true blessedness.

Which is to say, those who don't appear to be blessed in initial analysis are, in fact, those for whom God has incredible blessing. So, true blessedness. And then true righteousness.

Based not on the outward adherence to law, but on the purposes and the desires of the heart. True righteousness. Then true religion. That is to say, how do you give?

How do you pray? How do you fast? What is true religion? And that is, that which is done, not for anyone else's benefit, but God's. It's for God, primarily, if not exclusively, to be seen by God.

[3 : 33] True religion. Next, we had true treasure. That which is valuable in eternity, is far more valuable than that which is valued on earth.

And actually, Jesus says, the desire for these two is mutually exclusive. You were either desiring one, or you were desiring the other. True treasure. And then, last time, true peace.

Understanding the distinction of wealth, and understanding God's good and giving heart, is, it will tend to then reduce our worry and anxiety. If we can trust God for our eternity, we can trust God for our today as well.

True peace. Okay. And now we're moving towards the end, and chapter 8, we'll then begin with them, finally, coming down from that mountain. And it almost feels like we're entering sundry laws.

Sundry rules. Here are the other bits I wanted to put into this message. But actually, no, I think everything that Jesus is saying is connected, and I think it is integral to the message. And therefore, keeping on theme, I'm calling this last section true discernment.

[4 : 40] True discernment. How do we assess things? How do we treat others? How do we discern the prophets? And I jumped ahead in my notes a little bit and gave you that outline already.

But that's what we see. We see, be careful how you judge. Be careful whom you are investing time in giving holy and precious things. Be careful which gate.

Be careful of pseudo-profits. Be careful how you build. Be careful. So, that's what I'm seeing here in chapter 7.

True discernment. So, we begin in verse 1 then, and we're looking at this theme of judgment.

Let's take a quick read, shall we? So that'll be verses 1 through 5. Jesus says this. He says, Do not judge, so that you will not be judged.

[5 : 37] For in the way you judge, you will be judged. And by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?

Or how can you say to your brother, let me take that speck out of your eye. Look, the log is in your own eye. You hypocrite. First take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

That is our first piece for today. And it is immediately, I think it immediately occurred to me just how not simple, how complex this is.

Because there are those who will glibly rebuff any attempt at correction with a, hey man, don't judge me. Don't judge me. Jesus said don't judge.

Yeah, that's true, but you should probably read on a little bit more. Because, as I said, for me, I think the summary here is be careful how you judge. Be careful how you judge.

[6 : 43] Not don't judge. And Jesus is using, as we can clearly see, quite hyperbolic language, as he is fond of doing, to make his point. And, you know, when we read the whole chapter, we'll see that there are many things that do need judgment.

They do need discernment. So, be careful how you judge. So, what I hope to do is give you a good sort of presentation as to what this is saying, and then hopefully we can apply it.

I want to start with this. No, we do not judge one another in any judicial sense, in the sense of condemnation. Because, you see, there is one judge.

And it ain't me, and it ain't you. And I praise God for that, because we know that our own judgments are so often fallible. And praise God, because God the judge declares, Romans 8, 1, there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

And because for us, and again Jesus is speaking to disciples, for those of us who have believed and trusted in Christ, then we know Jesus came and he bore the penalty for our sins.

[7 : 55] Forgiveness is extended, righteousness is imputed. Our sin debt is cancelled, and rather than being judged and condemned, we are free indeed. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. There is no judgment. We have passed from that. However, there is a call to deal, to discern sin, and then deal with it on an ongoing basis.

And there are plenty of scriptures to show this, and we'll look at some of those. But first, let's zoom in a little bit on this verse 1, if I may. Do not judge, so that you will not be judged.

And I apologise, I was going to do some slides, and then it was 9 o'clock on Sunday morning, and it was time to come, so I didn't do any slides. So you'll have to use your mind's eye.

It's fine. It would have only been a slide with the Greek words on it anyway. And the Greek word is krino, for judge. Krino, K-R-I-N-O would be the anglicised version.

[8 : 56] Krino. And being a root word, it crops up quite a bit. Criticise. Hypocrite. Oh, crime and criminal.

Hypocrisy. Criteria. I could keep going. There's a lot of, even in English, this little root shows up quite a bit. Oh, and crisis as well. And if you think, you know, criticise, crime, criminal criteria, hypocrisy, crisis, this is quite a broad spectrum of meaning.

And, yes, there is. By one source, this little Greek word krima has, now it makes me think of coffee. Anyway, it is krima.

It has 12 different senses in the New Testament. 12. My goodness. How are we ever going to understand precisely what Jesus meant?

Well, by reading more than just the first three words is the answer. That's why we have to read the context. And, again, I hope, I mean, really that little discourse is just to show you that glibly saying, hey, don't judge me, bro, is not helpful in really understanding what Jesus meant.

[10 : 08] So, what does it mean? Well, again, we've read the passage, okay? What I wanted to do real quick is show you, I read for you the first two verses in the Lexham English Bible because it brings something out that's not quite clear in the NASB.

So, this is those first two verses in the Lexham. Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For by what judgment you judge, you will be judged. And by what measure you measure out, it will be measured to you.

There's a repetition here in the root word that Jesus is using, judge and then measure. And it's even more prominent in the Greek, actually, because a lot of these are compound words.

And, you know, so there's a rhythm, there's almost a poetry to what Jesus is saying here. Also notice in this that the object of the judging is left unspoken.

Do not judge. Do not judge what, exactly? And also, the one who will judge in reciprocation is not mentioned.

[11 : 15] It's in the passage there. So that you will not be judged. And we can fill those blanks in readily enough, right? Because Jesus goes on to speak about your brother. Who is that?

Was he speaking to disciples? So, I think we can say with a reasonable amount of confidence that this is talking about how we judge and how we interact with our brothers in the context of looking at sin.

And Jesus is saying that the measure we use is the measure that God will use back on us. So don't be a hypocrite is what he says. You hypocrite, first take out the log.

Okay. The issue is hypocrisy. We got there. Judging and assessing other people when our own lives or I should say other disciples when our own lives don't measure up to the standard we're using.

Well, okay. Let's colour it in. There's many passages we can look at but one that I wanted to look at was John 8 if you'd like to turn there. Familiar passage, of course. It is the woman caught in adultery and it's instructive for us to take a quick look at that.

[12 : 28] So John chapter 8, please. John 8 and then we'll read from verse 1 down to verse 11.

So, but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives and early in the morning he came again into the temple area and all the people were coming to him and he sat down and began teaching them.

Now the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in the act of adultery and after placing her in the centre of the courtyard they said to him, Teacher, this woman has been caught in the very act of committing adultery.

Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. What then do you say? Now they were saying this to test him so that they might have grounds for accusing him.

But Jesus stooped down and with his finger wrote on the ground and when they persisted in asking him he straightened up and said to them, He who is without sin among you let him be the first to throw a stone at her.

[13 : 38] And again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. Now when they heard this they began leaving one by one beginning with the older ones and he was left alone and the woman where she was in the centre of the courtyard.

And straightening up Jesus said to her Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you? She said, No one Lord. And Jesus said, I do not condemn you either. Go.

From now on do not sin any longer. Familiar story. We know the story. Much that we could say about it and I think we immediately see the disingenuity I suppose of the Pharisees.

This isn't about righteousness. This isn't about dealing with sin. This is about entrapment for Jesus. And as always their plan fails. But I wanted to observe here that the scribes and the Pharisees don't argue back to say well we haven't committed adultery.

We're free of that particular sin. Because I think Jesus' words are speaking to the conscience about sin. And you know Jesus has already shown in the Sermon on the Mount that actually the sin of adultery is only the outworking of the sin rooted in the heart that for sure the scribes and the Pharisees have.

[15 : 08] You know on that point James 1.13 James says no one is to say when he is tempted I am being tempted by God for God cannot be tempted by evil and he himself does not tempt anyone but each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust and when lust has conceived it gives birth to sin and sin when it has run its course brings forth death.

And it is that lust from the heart that afflicts all people. I was thinking about the very first sinner born on earth named Cain to whom God said this if you do well will your face not be cheerful and if you do not do well sin is lurking at the door and its desire is for you but you must master it.

You must master it. I find it odd sort of interesting to sort of meditate and ponder on the sense of sin being this enemy that is continually trying to lead us astray and we have to master it in the sense of master our ability to say no.

No. I'm going to do well. And so beginning with the oldest of that group of Pharisees they begin to understand and they wander off.

The women succumb to one particular temptation. They all succumb to others. And it's hypocritical to judge and condemn the sin in another if we know we're harbouring sin in our own hearts even if it's of a different kind because again James says chapter 2 verse 10 whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point has become guilty of all.

[17 : 01] So Jesus is saying be careful how you judge others here. Be careful how you judge. Be careful. Don't be a hypocrite like those scribes and Pharisees. Now I wanted to just cover off three things that this does not mean here in Matthew chapter 7 verse 1.

Three things it doesn't mean. The first thing it doesn't mean is this. It doesn't mean that there is no place for formal judgment. We need criminal justice system.

We need authorities who will judge righteously. If you're in any doubt you can have a look at Romans chapter 13 which affirms the need and the place for governing authorities.

And so the passage isn't speaking about institutions that need to exist to maintain good order. So secular discipline needs to exist in order to enforce law that protects and enables humans to flourish.

And then church discipline needs to exist in a way that maintains order in the church protects the flock from wolves and enables believers to flourish in their Christian walk. So we need those things and Jesus isn't saying don't judge means we should do away with all of that.

[18 : 20] Similarly when Jesus says do not judge he doesn't mean then that we should turn a blind eye to sin entirely. We see that in this very chapter. Jesus giving the prescription then for how we remove the speck.

So there's a need then to define sin and there's a need then to I guess protect one another from sin. You know we saw in our psalm didn't we that sin is a corrupting thing.

And in the church then where we affirm that sin is forgiven by Jesus Christ it for sure doesn't mean that we tolerate it and we accept it. we have positional victory over sin, over the penalty of sin and then we work out from that positional victory a gradually increasing victory over the power of sin.

And I think this passage is about how we do that together. And I think thirdly the third thing that this does not mean it has nothing to do with judging those outside of the church.

Actually Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 5 verses 9 through 13 in that chapter Paul's wrapping up on he's just berating the Corinthian church for failing to deal with this terrible sin that they were just turning a blind eye to.

[19 : 46] But then at the end of that passage from verse 9 in 1 Corinthians 5 he says he says I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people I did not at all mean the sexually immoral people of this world or with the greedy or swindlers or with idolaters for then you'd have to leave the world.

It's true enough. But actually I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he has sorry if he is a sexually immoral person or a greedy person or an idolater or is verbally abusive or is habitually drunk or a swindler not even to eat with such a person.

For what business of mine is it to judge outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? But those who are outside God judges.

Remove the evil person from among yourselves. So Paul says that and he's well notice what he's doing a few things. He's affirming the need for church discipline and actually not only is he affirming the need for it he's saying you didn't do it and that's a problem.

But he's also clarifying that this isn't applicable to those outside the church and he doesn't intend for us to judge unrighteousness outside of the church in that sense.

[21 : 11] That's not the role. So anyway enough of that. Let's look at how we judge them. So how do we apply it? We're talking about the context of disciples.

How do we apply this? When we look back at the words of Jesus we see him he's calling out and asking why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye and overlook the beam of wood in your own eye?

And this is ridiculous hyperbole. It's absurd. Splinter of wood, piece of chaff maybe.

You probably wouldn't even see it. What you would see is someone going like this. You wouldn't even see it I don't think. But the log though this is I guess it's something like this above our heads.

It's a big construction piece. 2 Kings chapter 6 verse 5 it's an entire tree. That's the story when they're you can read it for yourself.

[22 : 15] It's an entire tree is what we're talking about. Jesus wants us to conjure in our minds a picture of a guy with a giant tree sticking at an oblique angle out of his eye and then going you've got a little something in your eye there mate.

That's what he's conjuring of with this little parable if you like. It's absurd hyperbole as I said but it makes the point doesn't it?

If we want to be a blessing to one another in that we're a part of the spiritual growth of our brothers and sisters if we want to help one another to bring greater honour and glory to God through the ongoing turning from sin sanctification this is what we need to do.

Let's imagine that we are completely pure in our motives and our desire to bring to light a sin. Bringing up sin that's a hard thing to do. It's not a comfortable casual thing to do.

It's a hard thing. So assuming that we have pure motives for wanting to do that I need to bring this thing up because I want that person to grow in the Lord. Okay, what's thing number one?

[23 : 29] Look in the mirror. Look in the mirror. What faults do I have that might make it hard for me to actually correctly discern these things?

The log in the eye of the one makes it impossible to see the speck in the eye of the other. So I think the first thing then is Lord please show me where I need to grow.

Show me where I'm blind. Show me where I've hurt someone. Show me where I've uttered a cross word to my wife or exasperated my children or been rude. Show me where I've coveted or desired something contrary to your will.

Psalms 139 verse 23 David said search me oh God and know my heart put me to the test know my anxious thoughts and see if there is any hurtful way in me and lead me in the everlasting way.

Lord search my heart. So what does that look like? What does it look like practically? What are we saying? Well I think the first thing then is again how do we discern our own sins?

[24 : 38] In James chapter 1 verse 22 to 25 James says this he says but prove yourselves doers of the word and not just hearers who deceive themselves for if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer he's like a man who looks at his natural face in the mirror for once he's looked at himself and gone away he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was but one who has looked intently at the perfect law the law of freedom and has continued in it not having become a forgetful hearer but an active doer this person will be blessed in what he does how do we discern our own sins well God's word is able to show us where we go astray where we need to mature so read the bible application point number one got it he just didn't see that one coming but it's true right I mean and what James is saying is you read the

Bible you think it brings a bit of conviction to your heart oh man maybe I've read a bit too much for today you know we need James is saying guys let it speak to you let it do its thing so anyway read the Bible what else so but notice in the parable that Jesus gave is that we often find it easier!

to see other sins than our own! right? it's I can see ask whom do you trust enough to ask where am I blind?

or you know to put it another way who who is who's the Nathan the prophet to your King David? who would you allow to speak into your life?

Who is in your confidence? I believe that it is God's will for us all to have a support network where we're able we have that trust and we're able to speak honestly about these kind of things Ray and I met coincidentally a chap also called Nathan recently he's a local church leader near to where I live leader at King's Church and we did that because he's a great bloke but also because there's a need to build those networks and those relationships of mutual support and prayer and discernment and it is my prayer that we as a fellowship would become a place where we have these awesome trust founded relationships where we're able to speak truth to one another about how we grow because Christians grow in community and that requires honesty and it requires trust it's a super vulnerable thing to do isn't it though and it's hard

[27 : 40] I'm not saying this is easy and cultivating that foundation of trust takes time and it needs to be within a healthy context it's sad to say there are a lot of churches where it just isn't healthy and it isn't possible to have that kind of vulnerability in a way that's going to be edifying but my prayer for us is that we would that there won't be well enough said so that's thing one right our inclination is to discern our own sins first we are prone to wander lord we feel it we are prone to leave the God we love so allow God through the scriptures to show us pray like Psalm 139 allow trusted believers to speak to us and then secondly then when we do see clearly Jesus does call us to remove that speck he does call us to do it how do we do it well

Galatians 6 1 says brothers and sisters so we do it with great gentleness not judgmentalism and this is spoken to those who are spiritual which I suppose is a way of saying those who are free of logs moving on with the Lord and in tune with the spirit and prayerful and they still need to watch out for yourselves so that you're not tempted as well so great humility because we're at risk of temptation as well James again James 5 19 to 20 my brothers and sisters if anyone among you strays from the truth and someone turns him back let him know!

from the error of his ways will save his soul from death and cover a multitude of sins so now we have James as well chiming in we've heard from Paul we've heard from Christ Jesus we've heard from James and they're all clear that there is this call to gently restore those going to turn back how how how how how well Nicodemus is a very wise man and he said in John 7 51 our law does not judge a person unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing does it how wise what is true what happens how can we best discern these things Proverbs 18 13 says that one who gives an answer before he hears it is foolishness and shame to him and there's many proverbs like that that urge us if not command us to seek understanding and truth as fully as we can before we go off half cocked so that's the first thing seek the truth as best we can and then what well

Matthew 18 is a key text we will read it I'm not going to study it in depth because it's already half eleven and because we'll get there in six months probably but Matthew 18 verse 15 through 20 I'll read it for you that's me Matthew 18 and so it says now if your brother sins go and show him his fault in private and if he listens to you you have gained your brother if he does not listen so that on the testimony of two or three witnesses every matter may be confirmed and if he refuses to listen to them tell it to the church and if he refuses to listen even to the church he is to be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector truly I say to you whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven again I say to you if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask it shall be done for them by my father who is in heaven for where two or three have gathered together in my name

I am there in their midst so we will expound that in more detail in x months time and because and actually we really need to read the whole chapter to get the context where Jesus is talking about stumbling blocks forgiveness he's talking about Jesus heart to see the lost and all of that context is valuable for really understanding the text but I think the thing we can observe and take from our how do we practically do this thing is it's done as privately as possible you widen the circle only as far as necessary to bring awareness and hopefully repentance and it is necessary for me to add in the context of this passage this is only about brothers and sisters coming together in order to deal with sin we are not talking about criminal activities we're not obliged to follow Matthew 18 in cases where criminal and civil law applies you would think is obvious but I do have to say that because some people miss it and again this is about brothers peers and equals it isn't instructions on how the church deals with leaders who have gone astray it's a different matter entirely so a caveat I must put in but for us privately as privately as possible seeking to restore within the spirit of gentleness

[33 : 32] I guess seeking to try to show persuade but ultimately it's allow the Holy Spirit to bring conviction right we must press on let's look at verse 6 of Matthew 7 which says do not give what is holy to dogs and do not throw your pearls before pigs or they will trample them under their feet and turn and tear you to pieces well having just instructed his disciples how they should look to themselves and then help one another overcome sin Jesus now delivers what seems at first blush to be a bit of a non sequitur what is this well dogs and pigs are both contemptible animals in the context of Jesus dogs don't think you know lovely fluffy dogs who may occasionally tear up your sofa it's not that they are we should picture in our minds rough violent street scavengers and pigs are animals that are unclean in Judaism and they're prone to you know wallow in the mud unclean and the meaning of the passage then the meaning of this verse to me seems to be there is a limit as in the

Matthew 18 passage there comes a time when one ceases to try to bring understanding and conviction of sin speaking of dogs Proverbs 26 11 like a dog that returns to its vomit so is a fool who repeats his foolishness and another apropos passage I will share and this one is 2 Peter 2 verse 20 to 22 and here's a passage this is the only one I could find where dogs and pigs are similarly juxtaposed and in that passage Peter is speaking of false teachers and he spends a whole chapter giving them what for so 2 Peter 2 verse 20 he says this for if after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ they are again entangled in them and are overcome the last state has become worse for them than the first it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than having known it to turn away from the holy commandment and add it on to them it has happened to them according to the true proverb a dog returns to his own vomit and a sow after washing returns to wallowing in the mire dog pig and that little passage is tough to unpack how we understand the state of salvation for these leaders is a tough thing but I think the point that I wanted to draw out of it is the same one that

Jesus is making here there's a limit there comes a time when you are not obliged to keep trying to bring understanding and conviction of sins because there are people who just won't hear it and you will actually end up being trampled under their feet or torn to pieces to use Jesus words they won't hear the Bible they won't hear the spirit of God they won't hear the gospel they refuse to accept instruction or exhortation and Jesus is saying you and I would continue to try and help such people at our own peril for those who are stubborn in their lostness and refuse to hear a word about their conduct and lifestyle we are not obliged to endlessly try and help and support them that I think is the point of verse 6 I don't think that is to say we would ever stop praying for them I think one thing I hadn't said about the first passage is one thing I think that we can never do really with 100% honesty or 100% assurance is judge the state of salvation or judge someone as beyond hope because I don't think that's true with the exception of the unpardonable sin of course there is no unpardonable sin and I think that we are well advised to always pray for those who are lost even dogs and pigs to put it that to use

Jesus words again but I think there comes a point when we are not obliged to keep reaching out and putting ourselves as Jesus would say at risk so let's see if we can finish this up verse 7 down to verse 11 I'll just reread it to remind ourselves where we are Matthew 7 verse 7 ask and it will be given to you seek and you will find knock and it will be opened to you for everyone who asks receives and the one who seeks finds and to the one who knocks it will be opened or what person is there among you who when his son asks for a loaf of bread will give him a stone or if he asks for a fish he will not give him a snake will he so if you despite being evil know how to give good gifts to your children how much more will your father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him well we're shifting gears a little bit here I think we spend quite a bit of time speaking about the need to be careful and again

Jesus is using some hyperbole here fish and snakes eggs and scorpions but what we're saying is the point is God is an incredible giver of gifts better than me better than you we already read the the Lord's prayer or what I like to refer to as the model prayer and in it Jesus says when you're praying don't use thoughtless repetition or just after I should say don't use thoughtless repetition as the Gentiles do for they think they'll be heard by their many words do not be like them for your father knows what you need before you ask him and Jesus seems to be building on that foundation by affirming and clarifying the goodness of God you know I was at work the other day and someone told me that the

[40 : 19] Smiths around the corner were selling these half price Lego advent calendars 15 pounds for 24 little Lego models I thought amazing I bought two one each for my girls and I just wanted to give them to them straight away and it was like mid November but I and I just thought when I read this I thought you know I I do know and I get excited about giving my girls gifts Jesus Jesus says to me if you being evil know how to give good gifts to your children how much more will your father in heaven and I was like yeah that that was that blessed me God is a perfect giver and he knows what is truly good and he delights to give to us what is truly good and there are plenty of other scriptures that affirm God's desire for us to come regularly to him and ask him for things ask and it will be given seek and you will find we've just read it but then ask for what seek what knock on what and I was thinking on this and because you might one may superficially read this and go well ask whatever I want duh and there are verses that say ask whatever you wish but we have to always do two things right when we're reading a verse we have to consider the immediate context and we have to consider the wider context of scripture and allow scripture to illuminate scripture and the immediate context of this these words of Christ is of course the sermon on the mount and if you had to boil that down it is about the kingdom of God what is blessedness in God's kingdom how is righteousness how are riches defined in God's kingdom how should

I pursue justice what is true wealth these are the things that we've been exploring in this context and I don't believe that Jesus having said don't worry about material things God knows what you need is then meaning to say ask whatever you wish I think that would be erroneous because in this sermon Jesus has already said seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be provided to you so that's the context in which we are urged ask seek knock God knows we desire things and he does encourage us to bring those desires to him but our first desire is to be it must be God's kingdom and his righteousness not our own passions again James chapter 4 verse 2 and 3 James says he says he says this he says you do not have because you do not ask you ask and do not receive because you ask with wrong motives so that you may spend what you request on your pleasures so that's the immediate context for what

Jesus is saying and it leads us to see it's not a free for all we should ask what pertains to God's righteousness and God's kingdom ok what about the wider context how do people throughout the gamut of scripture pray and how are their prayers answered Paul I know we're running out of time I might skip a little bit how long have I been Sharon oh my days we'll keep going 2nd Corinthians 12 verse 7 to 9 this is where Paul talks about this affliction with a thorn in the flesh and there he says concerning this I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might leave me and he said to me my grace is sufficient for you my power is perfected in weakness therefore most gladly I would rather boast about my weaknesses so that the power of Christ may dwell in me Paul was seeking the Lord he was asking the

Lord and the answer was no or more explicitly the answer was my grace is sufficient for you was he was healing from this condition a good thing that a son should ask from a father what surely and actually right now Paul is enjoying himself completely free of the thorn in the flesh in heaven so then why was it denied well because there is a greater good that was to be manifested which is God's power perfected and we could look at Elizabeth and Zachariah childless into their old age and how often they must have prayed and then long after any earthly hope still remains an angel shows up Luke 1 13 and says don't be afraid Zachariah your prayer has been heard and it's like about time I don't know what it was but you know sometimes the answer is no sometimes the answer is not yet and let me give you one more example

Luke 22 42 Jesus himself said father if you are willing remove this cup from me yet not my will but yours be done and I praise God we should all praise God that that prayer was answered with a no because we needed Christ to bear the cup of God's wrath on our behalf how unthinkable the horror how earnestly would Jesus have preferred not to have borne it but he did it for you and for me the greater good where millions of souls are saved for eternity so summary then for this little passage here Jesus would have us to pray he would have us to come to our good father the God of grace and sometimes the answer is yes I am pleased to bless you with what you've asked sometimes the answer is not yet there's a greater blessing in the waiting and sometimes the answer is no I have something even greater in store for you perhaps it's in time perhaps it's in eternity trust me and wouldn't it be great if God would respond audibly like that sometimes and he did for Paul

[46 : 42] I guess but you know there's only ever one of three answers yes wait not no and the no is always because there's something better right I was going to cover verse 12 but I think we'll give that a miss so if I may just take a minute to summarise then so we've said I suggest we've begun a section called true discernment and we are called to discern sin first in ourselves and only second in our brother and we are called to discern the extent to which we should be seeking the lost even or seeking to try and convince those we talked about being careful how you judge it's not a prohibition on discerning error and sin what it is saying is that we need to cultivate a healthy habit of asking God to show us our sins and faults and it is seeking help from my brothers and sisters how can I grow and then on the basis of on the foundation of that

Matthew 18 this is how we then show faults in one another and then we talked about being quick to ask God we should be quick to ask God discerning the answer to that is hard anyway that's today's message thank you Lord for these things Lord there's so much here Lord and I pray that your word has spoken today I pray Lord God that your Holy Spirit has moved in this place and brought illumination and enlightenment Lord Jesus these are your words and we want to take them very very seriously Lord we want to understand fully what it is that you meant and we want to be as James urges us to be hearers and doers of your word so Lord I pray that your word would bring growth I pray that your word would bring truth that would help us to clarify how we should move and live in these days thank you Lord in Jesus name amen amen amen