

Matthew, chapter 7
Making Disciples: Sermon on the Mount, part 3

Jesus concludes His teaching discourse on how to be His disciples ... and by application, how to ‘go and make disciples’ by the pattern He is giving them

CONTEXT & MAKING THE CONNECTIONS

1 / As we make our way through Matthew in this survey/summary course, we’re having to cover a lot of text in every lesson. In many of our lessons, we’re even trying to cover as much as two or more chapters of text. So, as I have said many times before, we can’t even begin to give any kind of detailed commentary on any one passage. But, what I do want to do is cover the entire text of Matthew with these four goals in mind: **[1] Connections [introductions, conclusions, transitions]**. We want to make the connections with what has been written before, and what will be written after our present lesson text. Every passage in Matthew is connected to make the complete Gospel narrative that Matthew is intentionally writing. **[2] Context**. The context is the setting: *who? / where? / when? / why? / and how?*. And, we also want to not only set the immediate context of the lesson passage, but also show how the lesson text fits into the context [and connections] of the writing theme, plan, and logic of the whole book. **[3] Content**. This is the purpose, interpretation, message, and significance of the words in the lesson text. **[4] and finally & most importantly, Compliance or Conformity**. These two words are simply alliterated words for ‘application,’ ‘response,’ or ‘obedience.’ The Gospel of Jesus Christ that is proclaimed by His words and acts are not merely FYI—Jesus gives them to us for us to obey and conform our faith and lives to them. As Matthew will express in his closing mandate from Jesus: **“teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you!”** That is why Jesus said what He said and did what He did: to make us His disciples, to save and transform us, **“to bring about the obedience of faith...according to (the) Gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ”** [Romans 16.25-27]. Or, as Jesus will say at the conclusion of this present lesson: **“Everyone who hears these words of mine and does them...”**

2 / So then, that brings us to our present lesson text. **Matthew 7** will be the concluding chapter of Jesus’ first major discourse Matthew records [chs 5-7, 10, 13, 18, 24-25]. *All of these discourses are in some way core teachings of Jesus’ ministry of ‘making disciples of Him and His Kingdom,’* but this one is the most foundational. Or, we may call it *‘Discipleship 101.’* The other discourses will be supplemental elaborations on this first one. But, one way to view **chs 5-7** is to see them as *‘Jesus’ Constitution of the Kingdom of Heaven.’* The remaining discourses will flesh out more of the ‘articles’ of how His Kingdom will come and function over the generations to follow ... as we shall see when we come to them.

2 / We will divide **ch 7** into its larger segments and teaching sections...

I | ch 7.1-6 | Jesus prohibits us, as His disciples, from judging others hastily, hypocritically, and superficially (that is, according to our own standards, prejudices, and preferences) ... but rather focus on our own ‘righteousness’ or ‘righteous acts’ of obedience to Him—compliance / conformity to Him

1 / This has to be one of the best-known and most-often-quoted lines in all of the Bible: **“Judge not, that you be not judged.”** Of course, Jesus is not prohibiting His disciples from making clear and sharp distinctions between what is right and wrong, good and evil, righteousness and sin. All throughout Scripture, we are commanded to not only discern the difference, but confront it and call it out when we see it [see **Ephesians 5.11**]. Rather, what Jesus prohibits us from doing is making hasty, superficial, hypocritical judgments against the sins of others while we maintain our blind spots toward our own shortcomings and transgressions. We need to receive and practice this admonition in tandem with **John 7.24: “Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment.”**

2 / Also, the meaning of ‘judge’ includes condemnation and rejection [see **Romans 14.10-19**]. So what we need to do in all our evaluations of rightness and wrongness in our mutual relationships with one

another is begin first by evaluating ourselves in the light of our personal responsibility and relationship with God [**Romans 2.1-3**]. We must learn to see, evaluate, confess, and judge the sin in our lives; then we can begin to help each other deal with sin that may be in their lives.

3 / We may also see this rule for our relationships with others in the light of previous commandments and blessings Jesus gave us in the beatitudes, especially “**Blessed are the merciful...**” / “**Blessed are the peacemakers...**” / “**Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven...**” [ch 5.7, 9; 6.12]. All of us have known those who seem to think it is their gift and calling from God and their assigned mission from Christ to be pointing out and calling out the sins of others—many times in the name of ‘discernment’ or for self-justification. And, in truth, we are responsible to confront, rebuke, and correct one another in events of egregious sins [see **Galatians 6.1-5; James 5.16**]. But, even in those exercises, we do so while at the same time “**Keep a watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted ... For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.**”

4 / “**Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs...**” may be Jesus’ prescient warning to us that there will be those who will so virulently hate and reject the Gospel’s warnings against their sin, that they will instinctively oppose, reject, abuse, and attack us for even daring to believe, stand for, and proclaim the Lordship of Christ, His sovereign authority to define and judge sin, and the holiness of God’s Kingdom. In those cases, Jesus will instruct His disciples later on in ch 10.11-16, 23: “**And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town ... When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next...**”

5 / In all of our dealings with our own sins or the sins of others, we must remember that we, too, shall be judged by Christ who is the one and only true Law-giver and Judge. [see **1 Corinthians 4.1-5; James 4.11-12**]. “**For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged.**” [See **Romans 14.10-12**]

II | ch 7.7-12 | Jesus commands us to ‘pursue His holiness’ by ‘asking, seeking, and knocking’ for the resources of His Grace in prayer—to be freely, graciously, generously, and sufficiently supplied to us by the Holy Spirit [cf v 11 w/ Luke 11.13]

1 / Jesus’ prayer commands to “**ask, seek, and knock**” [see also **Luke 11.5-10**] serve as counterpoints to what He has just prohibited in vv 1-6. Look at it this way: one of the reasons we are often hyper-critical and judgmental of others is because they are not pleasing us, or giving us the satisfaction of living their lives as we think they ought to, or helping us further our own personal agendas. If they won’t ‘validate’ us, then we seek to invalidate them. When people are constantly at war with others, it is often because they are at war within themselves and with God. **James** deals with this source of common conflict among us in **James 4.1-10**. We all need to be watchful and on the lookout over our own spirits for this source of mal-contentment within us and among us. That’s why Jesus may be following up here on what He taught us in the concluding section of ch 6.25-34.

2 / Rather than fret and worry with anxiety, judge, condemn, and reject one another because we are not getting our way or getting what we think we need and deserve, we must trust the goodness and grace of our Heavenly Father. Go back and review what Jesus has already taught and commanded us in the contexts of our praying and asking God for all that we need: “**And your Father who sees in secret will reward you ... for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him ... your Heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you**” [ch 6.6, 8, 32-33].

3 / So, here again, Jesus reiterates that our Heavenly Father not only knows what we need, but He is kind, loving, good, gracious, and generous to give them. We give to our own children with this kind of gracious and loving willingness and generosity, don’t we? “**If you then, who are evil** [inherently sinful and depraved in our human nature], **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?**” In the parallel passage in Luke 11.9-13, Jesus is more pointed: “...**how much more will the Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to**

those who ask Him!" This points to and opens up for us the whole 'other dimension' of the Trinitarian cooperation in our praying [see **Romans 8.26-30**].

4 / **v 12 'The Golden Rule'** seems to be the concluding summation of this whole section, vv 1-16. Yes, 'The Golden Rule' serves as a 'stand-alone' in and by itself. But, Jesus introduces 'The Golden Rule' with 'So'—meaning this is His conclusion and application to what He has been teaching. "So" connects us with all the way back to v 1, "**Judge not, that you be not judged.**" As we have seen, we don't want others to be judging us with prejudiced, hyper-critical, unfair, superficial judgments, do we? "So," rather than judge others with evil and harmful judgments—whether in petty self-defense or vengeful retaliation—, we should rather bring all our needs to our loving and gracious Heavenly Father who will take care of us with His sufficient Providences ... and then, as we trust Him, we can '**do to others as we would wish they would do to us**' ... and as our Heavenly Father has already and always done to us.

5 / After all, "**for this is the Law and the Prophets.**" And Jesus is not only the Teacher and Fulfiller of the Law and the Prophets [see ch 5.17], but He is also the Model and Example for all of us, His disciples, to follow. And, again, Jesus will reiterate this in ch 22.39-40, where He will sum up "**the Law and the Prophets**" in the First and Second Commandments: "**And the second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.**"

6 / "The Golden Rule" is taught and commanded in the OT also. Leviticus 19.17-18: "**You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am The LORD.**" Jesus reiterates this OT 'Golden Rule' in Matthew 5.21-26.

III | ch 7.13-27 | Jesus concludes this discourse with a series of four metaphors. Each of these metaphors will illustrate the real-life contrasting natures of His Kingdom versus the kingdom of the world; issue warnings to discern the difference; and call for our response to choose Him and His ways

1 / **vv 13-14 | The two ways and destinies.** Jesus commands us to "**Enter by the narrow gate.**" The gate of our faith in Jesus Christ is 'narrow' because it is so counter-intuitive to the ways of the world's beliefs, practices, and culture. Jesus Himself is exclusively The Way [John 14.6], and if you enter into His Kingdom and eternal life, you must come to Him and through Him. But you will have to deny, disown, and disavow all the 'ways' that are so common and prevalent in the culture around you. "**There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death**" [Proverbs 16.25]. These are the 'ways' that are popularly common to the sinful culture among whom we live. And, Jesus' way is 'hard' in that you will be called upon to suffer the displeasure, hatred, canceling, and persecution of those who follow the 'wide and easy way.' However, 'the right side of history' will be revealed in the end: the narrow, hard way **leads to life...the wide, easy way leads to destruction.**

2a / **v 15 | The two kinds of prophets.** One of the ways that the 'wide way' is so 'easy' is that there will always be those who will lead that way in the name of religion. They will claim to speak for God, but they are **false prophets**. Jesus commands us to be discerning who they are—"Beware of them." There have always been false prophets, and they will always be around us, too [see 2 Peter 2.1-3; 3.1-3]. And the apostle John reiterates: "**Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world**" [1 John 4.1-6]. Further, Paul warns us that they will come in among us and appeal to us masquerading and "**disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds**" [2 Corinthians 11.13-15].

2b / **vv 16-20 | The two kinds of 'fruits' and the 'trees' who bear them.** This third metaphor [trees] qualifies and illustrates the second one [fruits]: the false and true prophets or messengers will be identified by the fruits or outcomes of their messages. Watch and see who follows what

they teach. In contrast, those who preach the Gospel of Christ and His Kingdom are **healthy**—those who believe and follow them become true disciples of Jesus. The false prophets who teach and preach what they know sinners want to hear from them in the name of ‘religion’ are **diseased**—and their teachings will only condone, approve, and confirm those who follow them in their sins and unbelief. They will not lead them to Christ and eternal life; rather “**Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.**” [See ch 3.10; 12.33-37]

3 / vv 21-23 | The two kinds of religious professions. These may be some of the most chilling words of warning in all of the Bible. ‘Many’ of the same ‘many’ who are on the ‘**wide and easy way that leads to destruction**’ [v 13] are convinced and have assured themselves that they are surely on the way that leads to the Kingdom of God in the end. They are sure they are saved and are doing the Lord’s righteous work—“**in your Name.**” [NOTE how Jesus repeats that they plead “**in your Name**” after every act of their resume’.] They invoked His ‘authority’ for everything they did! They invoked what they thought were the correct formulas and mantras: they called Jesus “**Lord, Lord!**” They are ‘religiously active.’ Many of them are the **false prophets** Jesus warned us to **beware of**. Many of them are the disciples and followers of those false prophets—who committed themselves to believe, trust, and follow them. Many of them will even be among the ranks of Jesus’ true disciples and do the same kinds of **mighty works in your Name** that they did [think here of Judas Iscariot]. Many of them are sincere—they will be truly blind-sided “**on that Day**,” the Last Day of Christ’s final judgment. **BUT**, the true mark and ‘fruit’ of Jesus’ disciples is: “**...but the one who does the will of my Father who is in Heaven**” [see ch 12.33-37]. Our ‘righteous acts’ do not save us, but they are the ‘fruit’ of our obedient faith in Christ. “*That I ‘say’ I have faith cannot possibly free me from sin, guilt, and punishment. How could something I say be my deliverance? Not that I ‘say’ I have faith, but that I exercise faith that saves me,...brings me God’s grace, and is my righteousness before God....God has given me life, and that means He has planted a will in me that can act—that must act, with unalterable necessity*” [Adolf Schlatter]. “*Yet it is possible to do all that and to call Jesus ‘Lord’ and yet still to hear, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’ It is possible to be lawless despite religious activity. ‘Religion’ without faith or love is as dangerous as devotion to wealth, sensuality, or power (Revelation 11.8; 13.1-18). There is a proud, loveless, faithless church activity that separates from God. So the religious might neither know Jesus nor be known by Him*” [Daniel M. Doriani].

4 / vv 24-27 | The two kinds of house (life)-foundations. This fourth metaphor is the response that Jesus calls us to make to everything He has just said, taught, and commanded us to do [or will later, in all of His teachings]. THIS is what a true disciple is and does: “**Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them...**” When we receive, believe, and obey Jesus’ words in true, saving faith, we will build the ‘house’ of our life on the sure, unmovable, secure foundation of “**the Rock.**” That “**Rock**” is Christ Himself [see ch 16.18; Deuteronomy 32.4]. Our faith and confession of Christ will not only stand the tests of time and every stormy trial of our faith that we will encounter here in this world and life; but most importantly, it will stand, survive, and flourish “**on that Day**” of the final Judgment. “*On Christ, the Solid Rock, I stand; all other ground is sinking sand!*”

5 / “*At the close of the sermon, Jesus poses a series of questions that Matthew passes on to his readers: What gate have you entered? What way do you take? What fruit do you bear? What tree are you? Do you sincerely call Jesus ‘Lord’? Is your religious activity driven by love of God and His knowledge of you? Have you built your house on the rock?*” [Daniel M. Doriani]

IV | ch 7.29-28 | Matthew comments on Jesus’ first major discourse with an assessment of ‘the crowd’s’ reactions to His teaching—they recognized His primary, first-hand, Kingdom authority

1 / This phrase “**And when Jesus finished these sayings...**” will conclude each of the five major discourses Matthew records from Jesus: **7.28; 11.1; 13.53; 19.1; 26.1.**

2 / Matthew also keeps us in the physical context by making these connective references to the ‘crowds’ audience which Jesus addresses: **4.25; 5.1; 7.28.**