

MATTHEW

Chapter 7

Judging Others

“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. ² For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. ³ “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? ⁴ How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? ⁵ You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye. ⁶ “Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces.

In the central section of the Sermon on the Mount (6:1–7:6) Jesus reveals divine truth concerning three topics under the general rubric of “Life under the Father’s Care”: “On Piety” (6:1–18), “On Possessions” (6:19–34), and “On People” (7:1–6). In this last unit before the concluding bracket “Blessing and Calling” (7:7–12) and the final section of the Sermon (“Exit from the Sermon,” 7:13–27), Jesus takes in hand an important matter, namely, the danger that a disciple with an arrogant spirit, who is blind to his own personal faults and failings, may pass judgment on a fellow disciple or even reject him. Jesus is not forbidding *all judgments* with regard to our brothers and sisters, but a hypocritical kind of judging. Moreover, his disciples certainly are to proclaim God’s Word of Law and Gospel to all people, and God’s Law rightfully accuses and judges sinners. Christians must proclaim God’s Word if they are to be “salt” and “light” in the world (5:13–16). (CC)

7:1 The Christian is not to judge hypocritically or self-righteously, as can be seen from the context (v. 5). The same thought is expressed in 23:13–39 (cf. Ro 2:1). To obey Christ’s commands in this chapter, we must first evaluate a person’s character—whether he is a “dog” (v. 6) or a false prophet (v. 15), or whether his life shows fruit (v. 16). Scripture repeatedly exhorts believers to evaluate carefully and choose between good and bad people and things (sexually immoral, 1Co 5:9; those who masquerade as angels of light, 2Co 11:14; dogs, Php 3:2; false prophets, 1Jn 4:1). The Christian is to “test everything” (1Th 5:21).

Seeking only God’s kingdom affects our relationships with others, especially in regard to judging sin. The Pharisees, who considered themselves above reproach, loved to judge others according to the standards of their laws. They found much to criticize. Jesus tells the disciples, “Do not judge, or you too will be judged.” (LL – Matthew)

NOT JUDGE...BE JUDGED – Jesus is not referring to a decision rendered by a human judge, nor does He mean that Christians should never confront others with God’s Law. He refers to the condemnation of a fellow believer by one who has not first practiced proper self-

examination (cf Rm 2:1; 14:10). According to Augustine, when we do not know the intentions behind a person's actions, "We are to put the better construction on them" (*NPNF* 1 6:54). *be not judged*. By God. (TLSB)

μὴ κρίνετε, ἵνα μὴ κριθῆτε—The present stem imperative form κρίνετε follows the pattern that began in 6:1, in which new topics or units are in part identified by a present stem imperative, either stated positively or (as here) negatively (μὴ) as a prohibition. See the first textual note on 6:1. (CC)

The meaning of κρίνω, "to judge," in each clause of Jesus' pithy teaching has to be discerned from the context. The meaning of the first use, where Jesus' disciples are the subject, is made evident by means of the absurdly grotesque illustration that Jesus offers in 7:3–5. Jesus is forbidding his disciples to criticize or reject a fellow disciple while being blind to their own faults. That sort of arrogant superiority complex has no place in relationships between Jesus' followers. (CC)

The second, passive voice use of the same verb likely has God himself as the implied agent: so that you may not be judged [by God]." God cannot, of course, judge hypocritically. But he can judge a human being with an eye only to that person's faults or sins. God *is*, in fact, superior in his righteousness and purity. If a Christian thinks that he can get away with assuming that posture over against a fellow disciple, he runs the risk of receiving from God the same kind of judgment, namely, a judgment with an eye only toward his sins! In that sense, the meanings of the two uses of the verb are the same: "to judge only with a view toward the other person's faults." (CC)

Although Burton understands ἵνα μὴ κριθῆτε as a "pure" purpose clause, reflection gives one pause. The reason *why* (i.e., the purpose) Jesus' disciples should not judge one another wrongly can hardly be so that they may not receive like treatment. This would make the sole motive for the proper attitude toward others the desire to avoid God's wrath. The force of the ἵνα clause here is more probably result. Those who are disciples of Jesus are led by him to be merciful, and as a result of being his disciples, they shall be shown mercy on the Last Day (5:7). (CC)

Jesus is speaking primarily to relationships between fellow Christians, as shown by his repeated use of the term "brother" (7:3, 4, 5). That Jesus has in mind an attitude in which a person is blind to his own shortcomings and failings is made clear by the picture of a beam stuck in one's eye. The hyperbole of Jesus' language is once again remarkable—it isn't even *possible* to have a literal beam in one's literal eye! Such a thing is unthinkable and even grotesque. It is even more grotesque to criticize or find fault with a fellow disciple without full and humble awareness of one's own faults. This awareness, in fact, is the sine qua non of brotherly correction and encouragement. If I do not realize that I have sinned and that I too have many faults in need of correction, I cannot approach a fellow Christian and offer him admonition or call him to repentance. If anyone should try such a hypocritical approach in dealing with a fellow disciple, he flirts with eschatological disaster, just as he would if he were to withhold forgiveness from another believer. Only God, who is without sin, can judge without any awareness of

personal sin and need for humility. And no one should seek to be in the place of God. Such idolatry will be condemned on the Last Day. (CC)

Jesus' words, then, in 7:1–5 are *urgent* words, and his disciples must take them to heart. Only with an eye to such arrogant and condemnatory judging does Jesus ever call a disciple what he typically calls his enemies: “hypocrite!” Whatever the situation, a disciple of Jesus must know that perceiving the sins or failings of another believer *always* bring the opportunity for self-examination and confession of one's own failures. If a Christian determines to correct a fellow believer, the heartfelt conviction will *always* be this: “There but for the grace of God go I.” (CC)

Yet this teaching will make every believer not only *humble* when approaching another Christian, but also very *slow* to do so. It will be no light matter to rebuke a brother or sister in Christ. Granted, it will at times need to be done—in love. However, Jesus' words in 7:1–5 should produce in us a godly fear that will purify our motives and preserve the fellowship of believers. Be *very* slow to rebuke another disciple; always approach one another in humility and love, with an eye to one's own faults and sins. Do not hypocritically judge or condemn your fellow Christian. If you thus reject her, you run the risk of end-time judgment and condemnation from God. The function of Jesus' words in 7:1–5, then, is not primarily to instruct us how properly to confront a brother or a sister over one of his or her faults. Rather, the teaching is given with authority (7:29) to curb, to prevent, to cut off a universal tendency to judge fellow disciples in a way that can cause deadly harm to both parties involved in the interaction. (CC)

7:2 MEASURE YOU USE...BE MEASURED – Probably a proverbial saying about fairness, similar to the Golden Rule (v 12). (TLSB)

ἐν ᾧ γὰρ κρίματι κρίνετε κριθήσεσθε, καὶ ἐν ᾧ μέτρῳ μετρεῖτε μετρηθήσεται ὑμῖν—The Greek word order of the relative pronouns and their antecedents is, literally, “For by which judgment you judge, you shall be judged, and by which measure you measure, it will be measured to you.” Sometimes (as here) the antecedent of the relative pronoun is placed after the relative rather than before it. Porter calls this “incorporation” of the antecedent into the relative clause and cites Robertson to the effect that there are fifty-four instances of this in the NT.³ Typical Greek word order would place the relative pronoun (ὧ) after its antecedent: ἐν γὰρ κρίματι ὧ ... καὶ ἐν μέτρῳ ὧ ... (CC)

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7:3 SAWDUST...PLANK – Jesus used a grotesque exaggeration to illustrate how absurd it was for His disciples to pick out the sins of others when they have not repented of their own. The Lord calls us to daily repentance. (TLSB)

τί δὲ βλέπεις τὸ κάρφος ... δοκόν—A conative translation of the present indicative βλέπεις (“*trying* to see”) is supported by the hyperbole of Jesus' teaching here. δοκός refers to “a piece of heavy timber such as a beam used in roof construction” (BDAG). Picture a person with a large beam of wood in his eye; such a person could only *try* to look at the speck (κάρφος) in his brother's eye! Davies and Allison refer to “the comedic, striking contrast between the beam and the splinter.” Keener notes Jesus' “hyperbole that may have moved an ancient audience to laughter.” Keener further invites Matthew's reader to “consider the absurdity of one's walking around with a thick roof beam protruding from one's eye (as if either end of it would even fit!), totally ignorant of one's impossibly grotesque state.” (CC)

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Many times, Jesus suggests, we attempt to remove a speck of sawdust from our neighbor's eye while ignoring a huge plank of wood in our own eye. In other words, we judge the neighbor for a relatively small sin while refusing to repent of a major sin in our own lives. We have no right to approach others self-righteously as judge. The issue is repentance. After we have recognized and confessed our own sins, we are better able to see clearly and help our neighbor repent of sin. Ridding ourselves of hypocrisy, we may seek only God's kingdom when we deal with sin in ourselves and others. (LL – Matthew)

7:4 LET ME – ἄφες ἐκβάλω—In the NT the *singular* (but not the plural) hortatory subjunctive (“let me ...”) usually follows ἄφες, the aorist imperative active second person singular from ἀφίημι, “Allow me, please,” or the adverb δεῦρο, “Come.” (CC)

7:5 HYPOCRITE – ὑποκριτά—The exclamation point in translation (“hypocrite!”) is justified by (1) this being the vocative case of the noun (ὑποκριτής) and (2) the fact that in every other use of this term in Matthew, it refers to enemies of Jesus and is the lexical equivalent of “unbeliever.” After “setting up” his disciples with the laughably exaggerated image of the “speck” and the “beam,” Jesus' exceedingly stern words in 7:5 have all the more impact! (CC)

Usually describes unbelievers; applied here to a sinning disciple. (TLSB)

SEE CLEARLY – τότε διαβλέψεις—Note the shift from βλέπω, “to see,” in 7:3 to the compound verb here, διαβλέπω, “to be able to see clearly” (BDAG, 2). Davies and Allison helpfully comment: “In 7:3 one simply sees (βλέπειν). In 7:5 one sees clearly (διαβλέπειν). In the latter instance one sees in order to help. The stare to find fault becomes the genuinely friendly eye of a brother who is a servant (cf. 18:15).” (CC)

Jesus did not rule out speaking to fellow believers about their sins (cf 18:15; Gal 6:1), but it should be done only after proper self-examination and repentance. (TLSB)

7:6 Teaching should be given in accordance with the spiritual capacity of the learners. – (The TLSB and CC give different view of this.)

Jesus may be quoting a proverbial saying, which He applies to His previous teaching. He compares His disciples to “what is holy” and to “pearls.” He warns that hypocritical condemnation of fellow believers (vv 1-5) is tantamount to throwing these precious persons out of the fellowship to the dogs and pigs. Disciples thrown out of the fellowship would obviously suffer spiritual harm, and the congregation would be attacked for its hypocrisy. (TLSB)

GIVE DOGS...CAST PIGS – μὴ δώτε ... μὴδὲ βάλητε—The aorist stem prohibitions here in 7:6 support the view that 7:6 does *not* stand as an independent unit, as many regard it. If 7:6 were a new or independent saying, one would expect a present stem imperative or prohibition, according to the pattern identified in the first textual note on 6:1. For this and other contextual reasons, I will argue in the commentary below that Jesus’ parabolic saying in 7:6 fits perfectly as a concluding statement for 7:1–5 and its teaching against judging one’s fellow disciple. (CC)

Jesus’ teaching in 7:1–5 is clear enough to most interpreters. The clarity, however, comes to a screeching halt with the proverb in 7:6. Although there is a dominant tradition of interpretation of 7:6, most readers of Matthew acknowledge that it is difficult to find the connection between this saying of Jesus and its context in Matthew 7. I will briefly describe the problems and then offer the preferred solution that I learned from others. (CC)

There is a powerfully dominant, broad stream of interpretation of 7:6 that appears as early as the *Didache* (9:5; early–mid second century AD) and continues to this day. Within this stream, a number of variations surface as to the specific aspects of the saying’s meaning. Despite the variations, this interpretive tradition agrees that Jesus’ proverb is a mitigating caution, a warning against offering valuable spiritual things (variously understood) to unbelievers who have shown themselves predisposed to reject or despise such treasures. The specifics vary as to who or what might be represented by “the holy thing” and “pearls” (they could be the Gospel, the Sacraments, Christian doctrine, etc.) and by the “dogs” and “swine” (generally regarded as unbelievers or outsiders). This general view believes that Jesus is admonishing his

disciples to exercise discernment in deciding to whom they should offer things of spiritual value. (CC)

According to this predominant interpretive stream, then, 7:6 in its context is a cautionary note, lest the disciples become “undiscerning simpletons” in thinking that all people will respond positively to the treasures of the Gospel. Yet there are at least three evident problems with this view. (CC)

In the first place, the immediate context is not talking about offering spiritual treasures to others. Jesus’ words in 7:1–5 warn against rebuking, with a hypocritical and judgmental spirit, a brother. A mitigating or cautionary note with regard to that teaching would have the effect of saying, “To be sure, there will be *some* occasions when you will need to rebuke a brother.” However, that is not how 7:6 is interpreted in the mainstream tradition; that tradition, therefore, does not allow this logion to relate to its immediate context as a cautionary note. (CC)

Second, the notion that one should not offer spiritual things to those predisposed to stubbornly reject them evinces a false anthropology. Who is *not* stubbornly predisposed to reject the Gospel? All people, as fallen sinners, by nature disbelieve in God, and all will reject the Gospel unless the Holy Spirit works repentance and faith in their hearts through the Word and Holy Baptism. The Gospel is to be proclaimed to all people, for without the proclamation of the Gospel, none would be saved (Rom 10:14–17). If Jesus here were saying that his disciples should not offer the Gospel or spiritual treasures to those predisposed to reject them, further questions would arise. How would disciples be able to *tell* who fits into that category and who is not? That line of thinking could even lead to double predestination, as if salvation should only be offered to the elect and not to those predestined to hell. (CC)

Third, I have observed elsewhere that any cautionary note that limited the proclamation of the reign of God in Jesus would be completely foreign to the extravagant revelation of the truth with which the Sermon on the Mount is replete:

Is it not the very “unreasonableness” and “exaggeration” of the Sermon that lend to it its unique power? The Sermon on the Mount completely lacks any sense or “feel” of “prudent caution.” ... Turn the other cheek, unquestioningly go the extra mile, loan without hope of repayment, and love even your enemies. ... Do not judge, ask *any* good thing of the Father, enter the narrow gate, and build upon the only rock which will stand—Jesus and his words. ... Throughout the entire Sermon, the tenor is the urgent, foolish, total abandonment of oneself to God’s kingdom, regardless of the consequences. (CC)

For at least those three reasons, then, we are forced to conclude that the traditional interpretation of 7:6 is inconsistent with the context wherein Matthew has placed this proverbial word of Jesus. If the traditional understanding were correct, the verse would have no coherent connection to its immediate context. (CC)

Occasionally a voice has offered a different reading of 7:6. In the third century, Methodius rejected the majority view because if it were the case, it would contradict the apostolic tradition that only by offering the Gospel to unbelievers can anyone be converted. Methodius concluded that the valuable thing(s) were Christian virtues, which were not to be cast out to the whim of impure pleasures. A few modern interpreters also diverge from the majority opinion, taking “the holy thing” and/or “pearls” to refer to such things as the character of fellow Christians; “one’s privileged rights” as a child of the heavenly Father; one’s trust and loyalty; or with a sarcastic twist, one’s own “precious” judgmental opinions. It is to the credit of these minority views that they work seriously to integrate 7:6 into its context. Indeed, one might even suggest that the traditional stream of interpretation fits so poorly into the immediate context that it gives rise to the need for another understanding. (CC)

Mt 7:6 begins with two aorist stem prohibitions, μὴ δῶτε, “Do not give,” and μὴ δὲ βάλητε, “Do not throw.” Given the structural pattern whereby the units of 6:1–7:6 have begun with present stem imperatival forms, the aorist prohibitions in 7:6 suggest that this single verse does not turn to a new topic that is different from the earlier part (7:1–5) of the unit. On the assumption that Matthew has organized the Lord’s teaching in chapter 7 with the same care that he exercised elsewhere in the Sermon on the Mount, we may assume that the proverbial saying in 7:6 serves as a summary, as the capstone of the paragraph (7:1–6). The Lord’s teaching does this very thing—a paragraph concludes with a summary statement—in a number of places in Matthew’s Gospel, including 6:34c; 7:20; 19:26, 30; and 20:16. Perhaps, then, 7:6 fits perfectly into the near context of 7:1–5 after all. (CC)

Once the issue is turned that way, it is easy enough to catch sight of what is, in my judgment, the likely answer to the enigma of 7:6. This verse picks up and rephrases the theme of judgment found in 7:1–5. Do not hypocritically judge your brother, and do not place yourself in the position of God over against your sister (7:1–5); “do not give the holy thing to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine” (7:6). If you engage in hypocritical judging, you run the risk of being judged (7:1–5). *If you cast out your precious possessions, you might find yourself the target of wrath and destruction* (“they turn and rend you!” 7:6). (CC)

To condemn and reject a fellow believer unjustly is like giving something holy to be mistreated by dogs. To try to deal with the “speck” (7:3–5) of sin in the life of your Christian sister when your own sins are overwhelmingly huge is like hurling pearls before filthy pigs so that they will be trampled—and you might end up being trampled as well! The valuables (“the holy thing,” “pearls”) thus represent other disciples of Jesus, and the wrongful judging of other disciples is the abuse of those valuables (giving them to dogs; throwing them before swine). There is no need to fully “decode” or interpret the proverb beyond that, assigning more specific meanings to all the elements. The proverb is a fitting climax to Jesus’ teaching in 7:1–5. One must and should treat one’s fellow disciples with compassion, humility, and gentleness. They are, for Jesus’ sake, a holy thing, pearls—a treasure to God, to be treated as treasure by you. (CC)

Perhaps the strongest objection to this view might lodge in the identification of fellow disciples as “the holy thing” and the “pearls.” However, the adjective “holy” does not possess such a technical meaning that it always refers to the same thing. In Matthew, five times it modifies πνεῦμα in the phrase “the Holy Spirit” (1:18, 20; 3:11; 12:32; 8:19), twice it modifies “city” in reference to Jerusalem (4:5; 27:53), once it modifies “place” in reference to the temple (24:15), and once it refers to “the saints,” the faithful whose bodies came back to life at the death of Jesus (27:52). This last reference brings to mind the common use of the masculine plural form of the adjective in the NT epistles to refer to believers as ἅγιοι, “saints” or “holy ones.” The neuter gender of τὸ ἅγιον in 7:6 is no obstacle if it is part of the proverbial saying, “Do not give the holy thing to dogs.” Other Gospels use the neuter singular (ἅγιον) in reference to a person and the masculine singular (ἅγιος) to refer to a “holy” man (e.g., Jesus in Mk 1:24; John the Baptist in Mk 6:20). Thus the use of “holy” in Matthew and the other Gospels neither strongly supports nor precludes the interpretation that I am supporting. In light of Mt 27:52, it is clearly possible that “the holy thing” in 7:6 stands for a fellow believer. (CC)

As for the use of “pearls” to refer to Jesus’ disciples, see the commentary’s treatment of 13:44–46. There it is argued that in the parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price, the valued objects are precisely the disciples of Jesus and that the man/merchant who goes and sells all that he has in order to purchase the field/the pearl is a metaphor for Jesus himself. (CC)

Although this may not be a completely convincing case for the understanding that 7:6 carries forward the same message as 7:1–5 and brings it to its climax, this reading does allow 7:6 to fit flawlessly into the immediate context. The fellowship that you have as disciples is precious. It should be guarded and nurtured, not destroyed by arrogant fault-finding, which is characteristic of an unbelieving *hypocrite* (7:5) and not a mark of one who follows Jesus. Let no one look down upon another in condemnation. Let all look up at each other in humble service, even when a fellow Christian has indeed sinned and needs a loving call to repentance. The motivation and the power for such an attitude come from Jesus and from his promise of the Father’s care, which both precedes (6:25–34) and immediately follows (7:7–12) this passage in Matthew 7. (CC)

dogs. The unclean dogs of the street were held in low esteem. (CSB)

7:1–6 One of the most difficult tasks for a Christian is to speak to a fellow believer about some personal fault (cf 18:15). This is especially difficult within a family or a congregation. Jesus sets forth a basic rule that needs to be observed: first, practice self-examination. If you do not realize your own sins and faults, you cannot offer admonition to a fellow Christian. One who assumes the task of taking the speck out of his brother’s eye must do so with sincere love, deep humility, and the prayer “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors” (6:12). • Lord Jesus, help me see the log in my own eye before I seek to take the speck from another’s eye. Amen. (TLSB)

Ask, Seek, Knock

7 “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. 9 “Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 11 If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! 12 So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

7:7 ASK...SEEK...KNOCK – The disciples have heard from Jesus that He expects them to be lights of the world (5:14) and to show compassion, humility, purity, and love. For aid in doing such good things, He exhorted them to pray fervently for the Father’s blessing. (TLSB)

receives ... finds ... be opened. Stunning unconditional assurances that the Father will hear and answer the prayers of His children; therefore, we can pray boldly. Like a Father, He will answer according to His good purposes. (TLSB)

Mt 7:7–11 does not emphasize the actions of the disciples, but rather the actions of the Father, who is so amazingly willing to give. After the stunningly unconditional promises in 7:7, Jesus with authority like no other (7:29) opens the scope of God’s grace to his disciples even more widely (7:8): “*Everyone who asks receives.*” (CC)

7:9-10 Jesus supports his promise with an argument from the lesser to the greater (7:9–11), a kind of argument that he uses elsewhere in the Sermon (see also, e.g., 6:26–30). What are mere earthly fathers typically like? When their children ask for food, do they give them sandstone or granite? Absurd! What about the request for a fish? Is it met by an earthly father offering a poisonous snake? Commonsense, common decency, and the rhetoric of Jesus’ questions that begin with μή all combine to give the answer no! No earthly father would do such a thing. It is unthinkable! (CC)

7:11 KNOW HOW TO GIVE GOOD GIFTS – Now in 7:11 the rhetorical trap springs shut—or better, the Lord’s bounty opens up. The concessive participle ὅντες (“being”) makes the bounty even broader: “If you, *even though you are evil*, know to give good gifts to your children, by how much more will *your Father who is in heaven [who is not evil!]* give good things to those who ask him?” As the comparison and the entire context of the Sermon show, “those who ask him” are the disciples of Jesus. And what are the good things? One could expostulate based on the wider context of Scripture and the Confessions, but why go that far afield? In the Lord’s Prayer (6:9–13), Jesus has already revealed the most crucial good things that the Father in heaven wishes to give: “Our Father who is in heaven ...” Jesus taught his disciples to pray for these good things. We know that his Father and ours will give them. (CC)

evil. Jesus took for granted the sinfulness of all human beings. (TLSB)

how much more. Again, Jesus compares the lesser truth to the greater. (TLSB)

good things. These good things include the Holy Spirit (Lk 11:13), daily necessities (Mt 6:33), and finally heaven itself (Heb 10:1). Luther: “[Christ] also wants to indicate that because of all the temptations and hindrances we face, nothing is more necessary in Christendom than continual and unceasing prayer that God would give His grace and His Spirit” (AE 21:228–29). (TLSB)

7:7–11 Jesus emphasizes the blessings and importance of prayer. Most important is our heavenly Father’s eagerness to give His children “good things.” Because we are evil, we do not always recognize that God answers every prayer for our good (Rm 8:28). Jesus guarantees that we receive God’s mercy and blessings (2Co 1:20). • Father in heaven, You give only good things to me. Increase my trust and confidence in Your goodness. Amen. (TLSB)

7:12 The so-called Golden Rule is found in negative form in rabbinic Judaism and also in Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism. It occurred in various forms in Greek and Roman ethical teaching. Jesus stated it in positive form. (CSB)

Summary of 5:17–7:11; often called the Golden Rule. Luther: “He concludes the teaching He has been giving in these three chapters, and wraps it all up in a little package where it can all be found” (AE 21:235). (TLSB)

Since the Father is like that, and since he bestows such blessings on the disciples of his Son, and since he will continue to do so and will finally bring all believers in Christ into eternal life on the day when asking will no longer be necessary, “therefore ...” (7:12)—therefore, now Jesus’ disciples have a calling. They are called to do good things for others in the same ways that the disciples both need and desire good things to be done for themselves. Why is this central to their calling, and indeed, a summary of the calling to which Jesus has summoned his disciples? Because Jesus has come to fulfill the Law and the Prophets (5:17–20), and the Golden Rule “is the Law and the Prophets” (7:12). It expresses the great heart and intention of God’s OT revelation for his people’s lives of service, and that intention is now fulfilled by Jesus and in his disciples. (CC)

The saying in 7:12 is easy to read, and readily remembered. Like Jesus’ teaching in 5:43–48, the commandment applies to the way Jesus’ disciples are to treat all people, not just fellow disciples. At first reading, one might think that the exhortation is straightforward and even simple. However, it is genuinely profound and should not be subjected to the contempt that flows from an easy and complacent familiarity. Luther’s comments are quite eloquent and to the point, both in his day and in our own, and so are worth quoting at length: (CC)

The trouble is that the world and our old Adam refuse to let us ponder what He [Jesus] says and measure our lives against the standard of this teaching. We let it go in one ear and out the other. If we always measured our lives and actions against this standard, we would not be so coarse and heedless in what we do, but we would always have enough to do. We could become our own teachers, teaching ourselves what we ought

to do; and we would not have to chase after holy lives and holy works, nor would we need many lawyers and law books. This is stated briefly and learned easily, if we only were diligent and serious in acting and living according to it. ... (CC)

To take a crude example again: If you are a manual laborer, you find that the Bible has been put into your workshop, into your hand, into your heart. It teaches and preaches how you should treat your neighbor. Just look at your tools—at your needle or thimble, your beer barrel, your goods, your scales or yardstick or measure—and you will read this statement inscribed on them. Everywhere you look, it stares at you. Nothing that you handle every day is so tiny that it does not continually tell you this, if you will only listen. Indeed, there is no shortage of preaching. You have as many preachers as you have transactions, goods, tools, and other equipment in your house and home. All this is continually crying out to you: “Friend, use me in your relations with your neighbor just as you would want your neighbor to use his property in his relations with you.” In this way, you see, this teaching would be inscribed everywhere we look, and engraved upon our entire life, if we only had ears willing to hear it and eyes willing to see it. (CC)

the Law and the Prophets. See note on 5:17. (CSB)

Jesus’ teachings demonstrated that He had not come to abolish the OT but to fulfill it. (TLSB)

7:13-28 The Sermon on the Mount concludes on a sobering, and yet entirely appropriate tone. The reign of heaven has entered the world in Jesus; he is in the process of enacting the Father’s saving righteousness for all. Nevertheless, there will be opposition, both to Jesus and to his disciples, for in the present time (and also in our day!), God’s reign is coming in hidden ways, in an unexpected fashion. Jesus will go to the cross, and his disciples will have a cross to carry too (10:38; 16:24; 27:32). Jesus will uniquely drink the cup (26:39), but he will also give a cup of suffering to those who follow him (20:22–23). Since, then, the present time is *both* the time of triumphant salvation and the time of struggle and danger, the Son of God ends this first great discourse on a note of warning that addresses his disciples’ present situation *in light of the Last Day*. (CC)

In the section “The Sermon on the Mount: Introduction” in the commentary on 4:25–5:2, I argued that the Sermon on the Mount has both a “doorway” and an “exit.” The doorway is the Beatitudes, Gospel blessings through which one enters into the Sermon. Without grasping aright the Good News of 5:3–12, one cannot then receive rightly and apply the teaching about one’s calling as a disciple of Jesus. The “doorway” character of 5:3–12 is formally reflected in the shift from third person plural Beatitudes (5:3–10) to second person plural (5:11–12): the truth promised in the Beatitudes shifts from a promise to “them” to a promise to “you.” The Sermon then remains in the second person (both plural and singular “you”) until we reach the “exit,” 7:13–27. This concluding section begins with the second person address characteristic of the Sermon’s body (plural “you” in 7:13–20), but then changes to third person address as the Sermon reaches its end (7:21–27). Those who entered through the Beatitudes and believed their

message are Jesus' disciples (5:3–12). To them he gives a calling (5:13–16), and he reveals the will of the Father in the Torah (5:17–48). The Lord teaches his disciples about piety, possessions, and people (6:1–7:6), summarizes their calling and strengthens them with Gospel promises (7:7–12), and now leads them out into the world with eyes wide open to the challenges and the dangers they will face (7:13–27). (CC)

The Narrow and Wide Gates

¹³ “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. ¹⁴ But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

7:13-14 Jesus contrasted the two gates and ways that lay before His disciples (cf Dt 30:19; Ps 1). (TLSB)

7:13 NARROW GATE – Jesus' opening statement in the conclusion to the Sermon on the Mount exhorts his disciples, “Enter through the narrow gate!” (7:13). He has the final goal in mind, the goal they will reach on the Last Day after walking through this life along a narrow and difficult road on which only few pilgrims are found. (CC)

How does one find this path and walk upon it? The narrative contours of the Gospel have already supplied the answer. Jesus *calls* you to this path, and we walk it through repentance and faith that Jesus of Nazareth is who he claims to be: God's Son, who saves his people from their sins (1:21). Those who walk on the path do not need to have perfect understanding. Such travelers will seek to be obedient to the teaching of their Master, but far too often these pilgrims will show themselves to be people of “little faith” (6:30). Moreover, as especially the parable of the Sower makes clear, some begin walking on the narrow path toward the gate of life and then leave the path because of tribulation or other distractions in the world (13:20–22). Jesus' call that places a disciple on the narrow way is a Gospel call. So also, Jesus' forgiveness must continually restore his disciples and keep them on the path to life. He will do this, for Jesus has already walked the path before them, as the Author and Perfecter of our faith (Heb 12:2). (CC)

Jesus' disciples in all ages have been called by the Gospel message to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the Savior of all, and the eschatological Judge. We too will hear and understand this call to vigilance at the end of the Sermon on the Mount. The hymn writer says it well: “I walk in danger all the way.” (LSB 716) But the path is not only marked by vigilance and danger. It is a confident way, and so the same hymn writer also said: “I walk with Jesus all the way.” Baptized (28:19), hearing the Gospel of heaven's reign in Jesus (24:14), and fed with the banquet-bread of Christ's body and blood (26:26–29), the disciples of Jesus walk the narrow road. By his grace, on the Last Day they will pass through the narrow gate into everlasting life. (CC)

hard. Gk is related to the word for “tribulation” (cf Ac 14:22). Persecution and ill-treatment awaited Jesus and His disciples. (TLSB)

7:12–14 Jesus’ teachings in the Sermon on the Mount show us our sins and describe the path on which we, as repentant children of God, seek to walk. Luther: “The true disciples remain on the hard path or enter through the narrow gate (Matt. 7:14), namely, the Word of God, saying: ‘I am helpless. May God help me. It all rests in His hands. He promised and said: “Just cling to the Word, and I will uphold you. When you find yourself in any extremity or distress, you will learn to continue in God’s Word. This will liberate you and make you a true disciple” ’ ” (AE 23:401).
• Dear Jesus, walk with me on the narrow way that leads to life, lest I stumble or stray. Amen. (TLSB)

A Tree and Its Fruit

15 “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. 16 By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? 17 Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. 21 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ 23 Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’

7:15 FALSE PROPHETS – Such prophets seek to lead astray those on the narrow way (cf 24:4–11, 24). (TLSB)

sheep’s clothing ... ravenous wolves. Outwardly, these prophets seem to be followers of Jesus, but their goal is to devour the sheep. Hus: “Consider the two sect[ion]s of the clergy, namely, the clergy of Christ and the clergy of antichrist.... [Laymen] may sit in judgment on the works of their superiors” (*The Church*, pp 159, 225). (TLSB)

Although there were (and are) many reasons why the narrow road to life contains few who walk upon it, chief among the dangers are false prophets who lead people astray, from the narrow way to the broad path that issues unto destruction. That is precisely why 7:15–23 occupies the central place in the conclusion to the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus describes false prophets as those who wear “sheep’s clothing” (7:15) and thus look like disciples themselves. From outward appearances, they seem to belong to Jesus. This is a point of some importance. The *outward deeds* of the false prophets have the appearance of good works. The false prophets look like disciples of Jesus. However, the Shepherd warns, “By their fruit you will know them truly” (7:16, 20). (CC)

7:16 BY THEIR FRUIT – Used seven times in vv 16–20. Does not refer to good deeds but to what the prophet says—his preaching and teaching (cf 2Pt 2:1). (TLSB)

grapes gathered. Rhetorical question. (TLSB)

7:17 *diseased tree bears bad fruit.* False prophets and their teachings. (TLSB)

7:19 *thrown into the fire.* Hell fire. (TLSB)

What is the fruit of a prophet, whether he is a true or false one? Since it is a prophet's fruit, it must be what he prophesies—not his outward deeds, but his *teaching*, his *message*, his *prophecy*! The point is underscored in 24:5–11, 24, where Jesus predicts that in the future false prophets will deceive many, at times by claiming to be the returning Christ himself and by performing great signs and wonders. It is true, on the one hand, that the proverbial nature of Jesus' words in 7:16, 20, "By their fruit you will know them truly," surely allows application to different situations and various kinds of "fruit." On the other hand, in this context, Jesus' words refer to the content of a prophet's message. In the same way that you can discern the inner health of a tree by the quality of the fruit that it produces, the quality of a prophet's teaching and the extent to which it conforms to the words of Jesus himself (7:24–27) will reveal whether the prophet is true or false, from God or from Satan. (CC)

Jesus does not here specify which kinds of doctrinal errors his disciples will encounter as they walk the narrow road to life. He surely intends that they have a comprehensive need to evaluate all doctrine, for at the end of Matthew, Jesus will declare that all who become his disciples must be taught to hold fast to everything to which he commanded the Twelve to hold fast (28:19). The church, which Jesus founded upon Peter's Christological confession (16:16–18), must be vigilant to evaluate all teaching and to reject any and all error. (CC)

Peter confessed *the identity and mission of Jesus* when he spoke the truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God (16:16). Above all else, then, Jesus' disciples are to evaluate all teaching that they hear *about Jesus' identity and mission*. Thus the first question to be asked is always, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" (16:13). False prophets will be appealing, loving, engaging, and nurturing, but they will describe a different Jesus—different from the Son conceived and born of the Virgin Mary by the Spirit's power, different from the Jesus whom the Father anointed and uniquely chose to be his Servant to save the world through that Servant's vicarious suffering, atoning death, and bodily resurrection. No human effort can be added to this work of the Servant; the sheep are *lost* and must be found by him to be saved (9:36; 10:6; 12:11; 15:24; 18:10–14). With men these things of salvation are impossible, but with God in Christ, all things are possible (19:26). Only Jesus drinks *that* cup (26:39), carries *that* cross (27:40–42), and offers his life as the ransom for the many (20:20–28). And only those who have nothing to offer to him, who are poor in spirit and lowly (5:3–5), will receive everything from him both now and at the end of this old aching world. Beware of false prophets, who offer any Jesus other than this one! (CC)

7:15–20 Just as there are two ways, the good and the bad, so there are two kinds of prophets. One can identify false prophets by what they teach, especially by what they teach about the person and mission of Jesus. Luth: "You must hold on to the chief part, the summary, of Christian teaching and accept nothing else: That God has sent and given Christ, His Son, and that only through Him does He forgive us all our sins, justify and save us" (AE 21:254). • Preserve

me, O Lord, from all false prophets who would take away my trust for salvation in You alone. Amen. (TLSB)

7:21 *says ... will enter.* Saying the right words does not guarantee entrance into heaven. (TLSB)

WILL OF MY FATHER – God works faith in me. He wills that the person whom he has given to Jesus will never be lost. God wills that man repent of his sins and believe in Christ, Mt 3:12, and that such believers let their light shine before men, Mt 5:16.

Jesus specifically identifies his disciples in two ways. They are his true family members, and they are the ones *who do the will of his Father in heaven*. Thus a simple answer to the question posed here in 7:21 is this: “To do the will of the Father is to be a disciple of Jesus.” (CC)

More precision is possible when we turn to the second passage that speaks of doing the Father’s will, the parable of the Two Children (21:28–32). For our present purposes, we can emphasize Jesus’ question after he tells the parable proper: “Who of the two did the will of the Father?” (21:31). This question provides the strong exegetical link between this parable and the Lord’s declaration here in 7:21. What does it mean in 21:31 to do the will of the Father? Jesus’ rejoinder to the reply of his opponents answers this question: “Truly I say to you that the tax gatherers and the prostitutes will go ahead of you into the reign of God. For John came in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him. But the tax gatherers and the prostitutes believed him. But *you*, after you had seen [this], did not even repent later so as to believe him” (21:31–32). Here we have a full description of what it means to “do the will of the Father” and so to enter “the reign of God.” It means to repent and believe John the Baptizer, who came “in the way of righteousness.” (CC)

7:22 *On that day.* Judgment Day. (TLSB)

say to Me. Jesus will be the judge (25:31–32; see SC, Second Article, p xxxvii). (TLSB)

prophesy. In the NT this verb primarily means to give a message from God, not necessarily to predict. (CSB)

demons. See note on Mk 1:23 – (Demonic possession intended to torment and destroy those who are created in God’s image, but the demon recognized that Jesus was a powerful adversary, capable of destroying the forces of Satan.) (CSB)

PERFORM MANY MIRACLES – False prophets may, with Satan’s help, teach remarkably, cast out demons and perform miracles.

They trust in their works. With its threefold repetition, the question asked by the false prophets indicates their expectation to enter heaven because of their use of the Lord’s name in what they did. (TLSB)

The false prophets claim to have acted in the “name” of Jesus (7:22). What were they claiming? At the least, they promoted themselves and their ministry as manifestations of Jesus’ own work and gifts. They likely even used the formula “in the name of Jesus,” though without believing what that name confesses about Jesus, namely, his true deity. The name of Jesus is the name of the one who is Immanuel, “God is with us” (1:23), and who shares in the one name of the triune God (28:19). Moreover, since the “name” of Jesus signals the reality and presence and deeds of the one who is being invoked, the false prophets also claimed that Jesus was with them (28:20), empowering their ministry and acting through them. However, only those whom Jesus has called and known may act rightly in his name, as the Judge’s words indicate: “I never knew you” (7:23). No one will be able to do anything in the “name” of Jesus, then, unless Jesus first knows and calls such a person to faith and discipleship. (An example of the abuse of Jesus’ name is recorded in Acts 19:13–17, where some unbelieving Jews attempted to use the name of Jesus to perform exorcisms. The evil spirit acknowledged Jesus and St. Paul, but not the unbelievers who had used Jesus’ name. Not only did they fail to expel the demon; the man possessed by the evil spirit attacked and wounded them.) Baptized into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (28:19), Jesus’ disciples will do many things in his name. (CC)

7:23 *I never knew you.* They never had a faith relationship with God. The Lord spoke similar words to the foolish virgins (25:12). (TLSB)

YOU EVIL DOERS – The ultimate lawlessness is the failure to believe in the One whom the Father sent (cf Jn 3:18). (TLSB)

What makes their evil works especially reprehensible is that they cloak themselves in the sheep’s clothing of false piety. Those who live for their own ends, and ensnare others in the process, will finally submit to Jesus’ authority when he commands them to depart. (CC)

Jesus describes the fate of those false prophets in 7:21–23. It is evident that he is still warning about the false prophets because those who will not enter the reign of heaven on the Last Day say to him, “Lord, Lord, by your name we *prophesied*, didn’t we?” (7:22). Remarkably, the Son does not deny that these prophets performed works of power during their “ministries.” There are, after all, satanic sources of power. The NT makes clear that unbelievers using demonic powers really can perform miraculous wonders and signs that can deceive many (e.g., Mt 24:24; Acts 8:9–11; 16:16–17; Revelation 13). However, the Son does reject their claim that they prophesied *in his name*, for he declares that there was never any connection between himself and them: “I never knew you” (7:23). In his sight, all their efforts are summarized as working “lawlessness” (7:23). They proclaimed some other way, some other Jesus. They depart from his presence, to join the devil and his angels in eternal fire (25:41). (CC)

7:21–23 Jesus describes the fate of the false prophets as it will be revealed on Judgment Day. Christ will condemn those who call attention to their own works and expect God to receive them into heaven on that basis. On the other hand, those who are saved will be surprised to hear Jesus

call attention to their good works (cf 25:37–39). God regards those works as good that give evidence of saving faith in Jesus, our Lord. • “Lord, ... when I appear before Your throne, Your righteousness shall be my crown.” Amen. (*LSB* 438:4) (TLSB)

The Wise and Foolish Builders

²⁴ “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ²⁶ But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.” ²⁸ When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, ²⁹ because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

7:24–27 Jesus ends His sermon with a parable about two builders who illustrate two kinds of hearers. The wise man hears Jesus’ words and does them. The foolish man hears Jesus’ words and does something else. Augustine: “If Christ is the rock, ... that man builds in Christ who does what he hears from Him” (*NPNF* 1 6:63) (TLSB)

7:24 WORDS OF MINE – Jesus and his words are the rock. Putting his words into practice describes the entire life of faith. Hearing and doing stand or fall together. A faulty foundation destroys construction.

The difference between the wise person, who builds a house that ultimately stands, and the fool, who builds a house that falls, is the nature of the foundation. To refuse to hear and do these words of Jesus is to build upon sand that will not permit a house to withstand either the difficulties of this life (while traveling either the “restricted” or the “spacious” way [7:13–14]) or the awe-full and terrible day of judgment (when each will enter through either the “narrow” gate or the “broad” gate). On the other hand, to hear and do these words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount results in a house that is built upon an unshakeable rock, a foundation that lasts eternally. This brings us to the issue of what it means to hear and do (or hear and not do) the words of Jesus. (CC)

In an important study, Jack Dean Kingsbury has set forth this Gospel’s intense interest in portraying the extent to which others “in ‘seeing’ or ‘hearing’ Jesus amid the events of the story, ‘understand’ him aright and respond by ‘receiving’ him and ‘doing’ God’s will as he teaches it.” Labeling this theme “the rhetoric of comprehension,” Kingsbury highlights three steps of interaction with and response to Jesus: (1) physical hearing or seeing, (2) the response of understanding and believing, and (3) the result of doing. The parable of the Sower fully portrays this sequence. There Jesus explains that the seed that falls upon good soil is “the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces, one a hundredfold, and one sixtyfold, and one thirtyfold” (13:23). Then there are also those people who, although they see, do not see, and who, although they hear, neither hear nor understand (13:14). Thus not everyone who hears

or sees Jesus *truly* hears and sees him—in *faith*. Only those to whose eyes and ears such things *are given*—to whom faith *is given*—are able then to respond to Jesus by doing his words (13:11, 16–17; see also 16:17). (CC)

With regard to these expressions in Matthew, Kingsbury cautions: “In noting instances of Matthew’s use of the rhetoric of comprehension, one ought not expect to find explicit mention each time of the full complement of verbs connoting perception, cognition, and reaction.” He adduces the example of the women who respond to the angel’s command to tell the disciples of Jesus’ resurrection (28:5–8). The text does not explicitly say that the women “heard,” and then “the Holy Spirit worked through the Word they heard to give them faith,” and so they “understood” and “believed” and then responded by “doing” what the angel commanded. Rather, the text simply states that the angel told the women to report Jesus’ resurrection to the disciples, and the women “ran to tell his disciples” (28:8). The audience of the Gospel is supposed to fill in the gaps or necessary steps in the process that led from hearing the divine Word to faith and action. *People respond to Jesus by doing his words only after they have both heard and understood, that is, have believed.* Other Scripture passages explain the process more fully: God’s Word and promise give the hearers faith in Christ, and the Holy Spirit moves regenerated believers to live and act according to the divine Word (e.g., Acts 10:44; Rom 10:6–17; Eph 1:13; 1 Thess 1:5–6). (CC)

We should understand both the man who “hears” and “does” and the man who “hears” and “does not do” in 7:24–27 in light of Kingsbury’s careful delineation of Matthew’s “rhetoric of comprehension.” In the first case, the hearing has been accompanied by understanding and faith. Such a person has truly heard Jesus’ words in the Sermon, and he has believed in Jesus, *who bestows the blessing of salvation and calls his disciples to service*—all with authority. Obedience to Jesus is the resulting fruit on the tree (7:16–20; 12:33). In the second case, the hearing has not resulted in understanding and faith; the person has rejected the words of Christ, and hence he does not do them. (CC)

7:25 BEAT AGAINST THAT HOUSE – This is a fierce testing of that house. This includes the final test, death itself.

7:26 ON SAND – Unless grounded in the Word of God and Christ himself, a man’s life is nothing but sin.

7:27 GREAT CRASH – Overwhelmed by the spiritual storms of life, he perishes.

Describes the foolish man’s life on Judgment Day (cf v 19). (TLSB)

7:24–27 Jesus begins this sermon by declaring that God blesses the poor in spirit, the mourning, the meek, and those who are hungry for God’s saving righteousness (5:3–12). These are the ones who receive Jesus and His teaching with understanding (cf 13:23). Saving faith in Jesus is living and active, eager to do what He says. “Good works certainly and without doubt follow true faith” (FC Ep IV 6). Jesus concludes His sermon by picturing the secure future guaranteed to the wise

disciple who hears His words and does them. • Jesus, my Teacher and Master, bless my hearing and doing of Your Word. Amen. (TLSB)

7:28 WERE AMAZED – Each of Jesus’ five long discourses in Mt ends with similar words (11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1). The crowds were astonished by the unparalleled authority with which Jesus taught (v 29). (TLSB)

7:29 authority. The teachers of the law quoted other rabbis to support their own teaching (see note on 2:4), but Jesus spoke with divine authority. (CSB)

Evidence of Jesus’ authority is seen throughout Mt (e.g., 9:6; 21:23; 28:18). (TLSB)

He preached God’s Word. They were astonished that Jesus, who was no scholar in the ordinary sense, could speak in this way. The preaching of the Apostles had the same effect because they spoke divine words. (CC)

One thing is clear to the crowds, however, and that is Jesus’ evident conviction about the authority of his own words. None of their scribes taught with such conviction. Nor should they have. Any authority that a scribe might possess in his teaching would be completely derived from the authority of the Scriptures. Any other teacher in Israel would need to substantiate what he proclaimed by citing from God’s Word. Jesus, however, teaches God’s Word from out of himself, with unfettered power and divine authority, and the crowds were astonished at this. (CC)

This is what lies at the heart of the life of discipleship: the authority of Jesus. In a wonderful narrative fashion, much of chapters 8 and 9, which follow the Sermon, will recount how Jesus ministered to, healed, and forgave those who came to him and *acknowledged his authority*. As the individual units in those chapters show, and as the commentary on them will attempt to extol, Jesus comes *with authority for those who are in need*. His is the authority of grace. His power is precisely the power to restore, forgive, heal, and make whole. The crowds merely marvel that Jesus claims such authority for himself and for his teaching. However, Matthew will relate how individuals approach Jesus from out of the crowds and come *with faith that Jesus does, indeed, possess the authority* that he claims to possess. He responds to those who have such simple faith by restoring and saving them. (CC)

With that kind of faith, disciples of all ages and times will receive the foundationally important teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. We acknowledge that Jesus does have the authority to say what he proclaims, to speak from the mountain with the voice of God himself, and that his words are true. Occupying the primary place in the Sermon, both narratively and theologically, are the Beatitudes, where Jesus with authority speaks salvation and blessing (5:3–12). To the sinners, to the poor in spirit, yes, even to those who are persecuted because of him, he promises the *present* blessings of the reign of heaven: the forgiveness of sins, fellowship with him and fellow believers, community during his ministry. After his death and resurrection, Jesus, through his Word, his Baptism, and his Eucharist, gives to all generations of believers the present

blessings of forgiveness, everlasting life, and salvation, and the power of the Holy Spirit for faith and life. To those who are lowly, who look for his coming on the Last Day, who have begun to be merciful in him and to share the Gospel peace that they have received, Jesus also promises the *future* blessings of the reign of heaven: the resurrection, full sonship, complete comfort, eternal mercies, the gift of seeing God. He promises these blessings *with authority*. (CC)

Then, following the blessing, Jesus calls us with authority and reveals the character of our calling as his disciples (5:13–7:12). What person is there who having heard and received in faith the authoritative blessing of Jesus would turn away from the truth of his authoritative calling? Jesus and his words are the source of life, both now and at the judgment. Jesus disciples are not merely astonished at his claim to authority, as were the crowds. We who are disciples believe in and submit to his authority, rejoice in it, and follow the Son of God. (CC)

TEACHERS OF THE LAW – The scribes and teachers of the law were concerned doctrines taught by men instead of God's Word. They had no shepherd-love and lead the people to obtain righteousness from human traditions and works. (CC)

When the scribes taught, they quoted other authorities. (TLSB)

7:28–29 Jesus was not merely a wise teacher, but He speaks with the voice of God. Our Lord and Savior addresses us in the Sermon on the Mount. He declares us blessed and calls us to be lights of the world because we are enlightened by His Word. • Blessed Lord, grant that I may hear, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest Your Holy Word. Amen. (Adapted from *LSB*, p 308) (TLSB)