

Sermon Title: Specks, Logs, Dogs, and Swine
Scripture Text: Matt. 7:1-6 (Sermon on the Mount #27)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 2-28-21

Join me, please, at the beginning of Matthew Chapter 7, as we continue our look through the Sermon on the Mount. We know it as Matthew Chapters 5, 6, and 7—and I'm firmly convinced that Chapters 5, 6, and 7 of Matthew are not a transcript of a recording of what Jesus said on that day; this is the inspired *summary* of that great sermon, which was the longest portion of the teaching of Jesus that is recorded in one place.

As you work through the Sermon on the Mount—and I'm sure this would be borne out if you went and counted sermons that we have devoted to it—there is more material in Chapter 5, more things to stop and look at, than there are in Chapter 6; there is more in Chapter 6, by way of paragraphs and subjects, than there are in Chapter 7. So, we'll be making our way through Chapter 7 more rapidly than we have through Chapters 6 and 5.

But today, we just begin this part. And remember: Jesus did not preach this in three chapters; this was one continuous sermon. I could not resist the sermon title, right from the text: "Specks, Logs, Dogs, and Swine." It doesn't get any better than that, when you're trying to help people remember something.

The Bible is full of instructions from God that tell us that we need to make judgements; we need to discern; we need to make decisions about right and wrong, and good and bad, and good and better, and bad and worse. We need to make judgements. Several quick examples: John 7:24—"Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment." First Corinthians 5:3, talking about a man in sin in the church in Corinth; Paul says: "For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present." And then, First Corinthians 5:12—"For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church?" First Corinthians 6:3—"Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more matters of this life?" Titus Chapter 3, Verse 10—"Reject a factious man after a first and second warning." Well, that means making a judgment about him, obviously. First John 4:1—"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world." (NASB-1995; and throughout, unless otherwise noted)

You are under orders from God to be a qualified judge on many fronts. Many commands require us to make judgments, and there are many Biblical examples of people making judgments for the glory of God.

Now, there are *other* commands which, at first, sound contradictory to that one; and you know what verse begins Matthew Chapter 7—we're going to see that one as we begin this chapter. But first, I'd like to look at another passage, to introduce our passage. It's over in the Book of James. And we'll find a tremendous amount of parallel between the Sermon on the Mount and the Book of James; there are several things in common there. Not surprising—the James who wrote the Book of James was James, the half-brother of Jesus (Gal. 1:19); who, when Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount, was a complete rejecter of his Messiah (see Jn. 7:5). But, when your brother rises from the dead, that tends to overcome some of the antipathy you had when He was right and you were wrong in every single family disagreement that came along (see 1 Cor. 15:7).

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James writes this, and it does bear on what we say this morning; James 4:11-12—"Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge of it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?"

Notice, there are two kinds of improper speech and improper judgment that James mentions there. The first is "speak against," and that's the best translation of that word. I do enjoy, though, [in other places], where the King James translators chose the word "backbite"—Do not backbite against one another. We don't use that word very much, but how descriptive it is! It describes a harsh verbal judgment that lowers one person's opinion of another—talking behind the back, biting them from behind (cf. Ps. 15:3). Romans 1:30 ties that sin to worldliness. In Second Corinthians 12:20, when it's in the life of a Christian, it's tied to carnality, or living by the flesh. In First Peter 2:1, it says that sin prevents spiritual growth.

The other word that is use, as something not to do, is the word "judge"—the same word that is used in Matthew Chapter 7, Verse 1; but in this case, it means to engage in making judgments on the actions of others *without a proper basis*. It's the Greek word, the root of which comes into English in our words critic, critical, criticism, and criticize. We need to discern, but we are not the Holy Spirit's little critics, to go around and apply our own opinions (Rom. 2:19).

We're going to need balance to understand the command in Matthew 7 that says *not* to judge, as we weight it against all of these things that we *need* to do when we make judgments. When we are called upon to go to one who has fallen into a "trespass" and "restore" them "in a spirit of gentleness" (Gal. 6:1), does that not require a form of judging? Don't we *need* to make a judgment in order to confront a sin?

And by the way: wasn't *Jesus*, in this entire sermon, judging the system of the Pharisees? So, how do we put this together when He says, in Matthew 7, Verse 1: "Do not judge so that you will not be judged"?

I don't think I'm alone in saying that I have heard this quoted *many* times—many, many times—but of the myriad times that I have heard it, I have *very rarely* heard it used with an accurate interpretation and application. The most common way you get this verse quoted to you is by a Non-Christian—someone who rejects Christ and does not believe the authority of the Word of God—they'll rip this verse out of context, and slap it on you, as if to tell *you* how *you* need to act as a Christian toward them, while they do blasphemous things! Isn't it wonderful when you have unbelievers tell you what a *real* Christian looks like? I hope they can tell by watching us.

It's also common if you are in a situation—and I hope you *don't* have to be in this situation, but you will be—where you have to confront a fellow Christian on a matter of some ongoing sin; you often get this verse as the retort: "Do not judge."

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Well, how do we put all this together? Let me suggest to you that a good starting point is to ask yourself two questions; and these will help you keep the balance that you need.

The first one is: What are you talking about? If you're going to make a judgment, *make sure* it is a judgment that God has made. In other words, is it something that the Bible calls "sin," or are you just expressing your own feelings—your own opinions, your own preferences of how things ought to be? That's the difference between whether you have a responsibility and a godly authority to deal with a situation, or if it's just a matter of opinion. The standard of all judgment is *always* the Word of God (Is. 8:20; 2 Pet. 3:2), and the only authority that we have to discern the propriety of somebody's behavior is based upon the authority of God's Word (2 Tim. 3:16). If God says "Don't do it," don't do it. If God says "Do it," do it. And if somebody is disobeying one of those things, *that* is sin. If it's a matter of, you know, Ford versus Chevy—I think you can bite your tongue and let the other person go their way.

The second question to ask is: Who are you talking to? If you are dealing with a Biblical issue—right and wrong, sin or righteousness—and you are talking to the person who you're worried about, the one who is committing that sin; if you're talking to them in person, in private, you are doing the will of God (Matt. 18:15). If you're talking to *anybody else* about it, *instead of* going to that person, you're not only *not* doing the will of God, you're making it *far worse*, because now you're adding the sin of gossip into the relationships in the Body of Christ! To lovingly point out an error and correct someone, and keep them from wandering off the path—that's an act of love (Jas. 5:19-20). But, to go behind somebody's back—to "backbite," if you will; to "speak against"—just to be critical to a third person, that is basically spreading spiritual poison. Don't do it!

So, What are you talking about? and Who are you talking to?

Now, let's look at Matthew Chapter 7, Verses 1 through 6. Pretty simple to outline: Do Not Judge—first two verses. Specks And Logs—Verses 3 through 5. And, Dogs And Swine—Verse 6. You don't often get a passage that just *demand*s a sermon title that memorable, as Specks And Logs, Dogs And Swine.

Alright, let's look at it: Matthew Chapter 7, Verse 1—"Do not judge so that you will not be judged." Now, to avoid that sentimental but very wrong interpretation that means you can never form an opinion about a person or express it, remember the theme-verse of the entire sermon. As I said, this whole sermon was Jesus expressing His collective judgment on the entire system of the Pharisees. Matthew Chapter 5, Verse 20, is the theme-verse of the whole sermon: "For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven."

What was Jesus's judgment? Their entire system falls *completely* short of even the possibility of getting your *toenail* over the lip of the door of the Kingdom of Heaven! So, that's a pretty strong...well, *judgment*. And Jesus said all of this from the perspective of contrasting hypocritical self-righteousness (Is. 65:5)—as that of the scribes and Pharisees—with true religion.

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The Pharisees had established their own man-made definitions of righteousness. I think they truly believed that they were fulfilling the Law of God (Mk. 10:20; Lk. 18:11-12). They did not understand that no one *ever* has been saved by keeping the Law (Gal. 3:21; cf. Rom. 4:1-3; Heb. 11:4). No one ever *has been* saved by keeping the Law; no one *can ever* be saved by keeping the Law (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 2:16)—*but* we will all be *judged* by the Law (1 Jn. 3:4), and we will all be deemed "guilty" (Jas. 2:10; cf. Gal. 3:10)—*except* those who recognized their guilt (Ps. 32:5), called out to God for forgiveness and mercy (Lk. 18:13; Rom. 10:13), and received "the free gift" of "eternal life" (Rom. 6:23), in which Christ's righteousness is applied to us (Is. 53:11; Rom. 4:3; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9).

So, they missed it (Rom. 10:3); and their belief formed the basis for them constantly judging the actions of others. They were the self-appointed critics of the people of their day (Jn. 7:47-49). And Jesus condemns that spirit of censuring people, judging harshly and self-righteously—without mercy, without love, and without kindness or tenderness (Matt. 9:11-13).

So, obviously, we want to be like Jesus; we want to make the *right* judgments. Let me give you a few guardrails to help keep your speech in line—to other people, and *about* other people.

One is: Avoid saying what is untrue. Exodus 23:1—"You shall not bear a false report; do not join your hand with a wicked man to be a malicious witness." That's a serious thing!

Avoid saying what is unnecessary. Just because you heard something, doesn't mean you need to repeat it! Proverbs 11:13—"He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets, but he who is trustworthy conceals a matter." Now, that doesn't mean you hide truth; it doesn't mean you refuse to speak "the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15). But, not *everything* needs to be repeated, or stated, or explained to somebody else. Peter's version of this is: "Love covers a multitude of sins" (1 Pet. 4:8; cf. Prov. 10:12)—not *whitewashes* them; but if something is resolved, it never needs to be repeated again (Prov. 17:9).

Or, avoid saying what is unkind. Proverbs 18:8—"The words of a whisperer are like dainty morsels, and they go down into the innermost parts of the body." Isn't that a vivid description—"dainty morsels"? You know, somebody has that box of candy open in front of you, and you can smell it..."Which 'dainty morsel' am I going to *delight* my palate with?" That's how we think about criticism of somebody else.

Avoiding the sin of unrighteous judging—it's a constant battle, because it comes *naturally* to us! I mean, you know—your opinions are *all* right (Prov. 21:2), and everybody else, if they would *only* wise up, would agree with you! We all know that, right?

And we all have a very keen sense of rumor; we *love* to hear that little whispering of the talebearer, that 'dainty morsel.' You mix that in with a legalistic religious system of do's and don'ts, and you have an elitist leadership group that feels they have the answers to everything—and all of a sudden, the sin of improper judgment is going to run *rampant*.

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The command not to judge is only *part* of what Jesus said here. Read on; look at Verses 1 and 2 together: "Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you."

That's just a corollary of what we already saw, back in Chapter 6—how you treat other people in the realm of forgiveness. Matthew 6:14-15—"For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions." You have to be transformed by the grace of God!

If you judge without mercy, you can expect merciless judgment (Jas. 2:13a). If you judge kindly, you can expect to be judged and treated kindly. Listen to Luke's record of this statement, over in Luke Chapter 6, Verses 36 through 38, where Jesus says: "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned. Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return."

Have you ever noticed Deuteronomy 19:16, talking about being a false accuser? And the standard, under the Mosaic Law, is that if someone brings an accusation against someone else and it is proven to be false, "You shall do to him just as he had intended to do to his brother" (vs. 19). I have seen that work out, in the providence of God, in real life, in the kind of ways that make you shiver at the majesty of the judgment of God.

People are not "under us" for us to judge. Such judgment as is condemned here—it's kind of like a spiritual boomerang; it comes back on the one who passes the judgment. Don't be that guy who died trying to throw away his boomerang! In the Book of Esther, we see how "Haman" was "hanged" on the very "gallows which he had prepared for Mordecai" (Est. 7:10), who was innocent. That's an example of Matthew 7:1-2, only they hadn't read it yet because Jesus hadn't come yet. But that's applied within the providence of God (see Prov. 26:27).

And that takes us to Specks And Logs: Matthew 7:3-5—"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 the speck out of your eye,' and behold, 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."

I remember, as a young believer, hearing a preacher wax eloquent on this passage; and he was saying, "Here's the deal with the speck and the log. You see that somebody is blinking, and you can look and you say, 'Ah, there's that little speck in your eye.' But if you take that speck out of your brother's eye, and you bring it closer and closer and closer to your own eye, eventually, it looks like a log—and so, it's exactly the same sin, but it's whether it's in your life or in his life." Boy, that'll *preach*—it's just that it isn't what Jesus was talking about when He said this.

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The question is: Who *is* this would-be spiritual eye doctor? What is He talking about here? Well, the answer is right in the context; in Verse 5, He calls him a "hypocrite." The "log" is hypocrisy! What did the Pharisees worry about? Tithing even of all their spices—give one tenth of your "mint and dill and cummin," and you're missing "the weightier provisions of the law" (Matt. 23:23). *That's* what the "log" is; it's describing any person who is carrying around a Pharisaic attitude.

And what is the attitude of the Pharisees? You don't have to guess—it's recorded for us and described for us over in Luke Chapter 18, if you haven't already gotten it from what we've read in Matthew. Luke 18:9—Jesus "also told this parable to some people"—look in the context: Pharisees (vs. 11)—"who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt."

Now, about the time we're looking for a Pharisee that we can paddle around, understand that in the heart of *every one of us*, there lurks a Pharisee. It's *so easy* to fall into that mindset! To the extent that we don't let the grace of God thoroughly transform us—that we don't let it change us from the inside out—we can start playing the role of a Pharisee; we can consider ourselves "righteous," to be the self-appointed critic of others. A person can be doing ever-so-well in his own mind, but if you're not *humble*, there is a log in the eye—the log of self-righteousness.

Remember what Jesus told, by way of that parable, right after the verse that we just read? Look on, to Luke 18, Verses 10 through 12—"Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector." One regarded as the most righteous, one regarded as the most *disgusting* in the whole society. "The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself"—I never get over that; I *love* the way that is stated! "God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get."

Understand: There is nothing wrong with being different from worldly people around you. It is *good* not to be a swindler, or dishonest, or an adulterer. There is nothing wrong with fasting. There's nothing wrong with fasting "twice a week," if you choose to—or with paying tithes. But, there's a *huge problem*—like the size of a log in your eye—there's a *huge problem* with *being proud about it*, and putting down other people who aren't just like you—despising people who are different!

When, by the grace of God, the "log" of your self-righteousness has been removed, *then* you can "see clearly" enough to be used by God to help your brother or sister get that "speck" out of their eye. Jesus did not mean to discourage mutual encouragement (Rom. 1:12; Gal. 6:2; Heb. 10:24), mutual discipline—or, holding each other accountable to God's Word (Rom. 15:14). As a matter of fact, He encourages us; He says it's a *good thing* to help get that speck out of your brother's eye! Have you ever had something in your eye? It's not fun! Helping brothers and sisters in Christ deal with sin and escape its entanglement—that's part of our duty. Galatians Chapter 6, Verse 1—"Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted."

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Jesus went to great lengths to give us instructions about that, in Matthew 18:15-20, how to do it. Paul gives us an example of applying it, in Second Thessalonians Chapter 3; and then, his own example of even confronting the Apostle Peter, in Galatians Chapter 2. Just make sure you keep a constant check on your motivation. Get the "log" out of your own eye before you help with the "speck."

Now, Dogs And Swine—Verse 6. This verse is here to shatter the notion of the sappy, sentimental misinterpretation of Verse 1 that says, in the name of love and humility, you never point out wrong, you never confront anything in a brother or sister's life to correct error. As a matter of fact, we know Jesus *wants* us to hold each other accountable to His truth (Matt. 18:15; 2 Cor. 2:6; 2 Thess. 3:14-15). But He wisely gives us a boundary on confronting. Matthew Chapter 7, Verse 6—"Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces."

Now, that is clever—but it's kind of obscure, at first glance. I've seen this included in many places where people speak about "hard sayings" of the Bible—that is, "things" that are "hard to understand" (2 Pet. 3:16). But if we sort out how Jesus would have expected His *hearers* to understand it, I think we'll do just fine in figuring out how we are supposed to obey it.

In Biblical times, dogs were not like your precious Fluffy. They were seldom kept as household pets, like they are today. Now, we consider an unadopted dog to be the exception, and something that has to be taken care of; we have to help that dog find a home. But in Jesus's day, they were wild animals, usually running in packs, usually running loose in the streets—wild, savage, and ugly. They prowled through garbage and rubbish. They were scavengers. They were considered unclean and filthy for their uninhibited greed and shamelessness.

Pigs—swine—pretty much the same thing. They were considered by the Jews to be the epitome of uncleanness. That's why it was such an abomination when that man named Antiochus Epiphanes sacrificed a pig on the Jewish altar, and forced the priests to eat it. Now, that set off a kerfuffle—the whole Maccabean revolt against Greece in 168 B.C. That event is actually believed to be the foretaste of the "abomination of desolation" predicted in Daniel Chapter 9, and reiterated by Jesus in Matthew 24. Because a Jew would never have tried to domesticate a pig, most of the swine in Jewish areas were not like the ones when Jesus went over to "the Gerasenes" (Lk. 8:26), and there was the "herd of many swine" (vs. 32) feeding there—that was Gentiles raising pigs for food and for profit. Jews didn't do that. If there were swine there, they ran around like dogs—wild animals that foraged for themselves, usually in garbage dumps.

Both dogs and swine were famous as pictures of being greedy, vicious, and filthy. You come between them and their food, and they would certainly "turn and tear you to pieces." Jesus's point is that certain truths and blessings of our faith are not for sharing with people who *already* have declared themselves antagonistic to the things of God and to the people of God. Some people are spiritual "dogs" and "swine."

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"What is holy" and "pearls"—they represent the truth and the righteousness of the Word of God. So, "Do not give what is holy to dogs." Now, that doesn't mean that when you leave the restaurant, you get a doggy bag; and you go home, and before you give it to the dog, you pray over it again and say, "Lord, please *unbless* this so it's not holy, and I can give it to the dog."

No—"dogs" and "swine" represent the kind of people who would "turn and tear you to pieces" if you again start talking to them about the things of God. They're people who refuse to have anything to do with the holy and precious things of God; they "trample them under their feet," they "turn" and "tear God's people to pieces" (cf. Prov. 23:9).

Understand—there is the *presumption* there that they have already declared themselves, and *that* includes the assumption that you've already talked to them. So, there is a time to draw a line, if you will. Remember when Jesus sent the Twelve out on their first preaching tour, and He told them, among other things: Matthew 10:14—"Whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake the dust off your feet." In other words, He said: "I have sheep out there—*go find them!* Bring them into the fold! But there are others who, when they reject you, don't keep casting pearls before swine. Don't keep throwing what is holy to dogs."

Or, the Apostle Paul described when the Jews in Corinth rejected the Gospel, in Acts 18:6—"But when they resisted and blasphemed, he shook out his garments"—another way of saying, "Okay, I'm done here"—"and said to them, 'Your blood be on your own heads! I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.' " (cf. Acts 13:45-46). I am clean, because I have told you the truth; that's my responsibility (Ezek. 3:18-19). You have *blasphemed* in response to hearing the truth. I'm done!

This passage is about rejecting hypocrisy. It's about accepting people as beloved of God—as precious souls "for whom Christ died" (Rom. 14:15). It's about purging legalism from our lives, and not foisting our personal convictions on other people.

But it's *also* about dealing with people in humility, and in wisdom. It's against making *improper* judgments in a critical spirit, but it requires us to make *proper* judgments according to the Word of God, at the right time, and for the right purposes.

Now, let me suggest to you: Apply a little "Matthew Chapter 7, Verse 6" when you have conversations on the Internet. There are plenty of people out there who would *happily* shred you! (see Prov. 20:3) How many of you have come to Christ because somebody won the argument on Facebook? *It doesn't happen!* Okay, it *can* happen—"With God all things are possible" (Matt. 19:26).

But look: Preach the Gospel to those who need it. Share Christ with anyone who will listen to you (Acts 18:4). Do it "in love" (Eph. 4:15; cf. Ps. 141:5; Prov. 3:3). Do it as often as you can (Mk. 16:15; Acts 8:4). But when someone stiffens their back and turns on you and starts attacking you, *go somewhere else* (Matt. 10:23). That's basically what Matthew Chapter 7, Verse 6, is saying.

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Now, in case you haven't faced it yet, it occurred to me that we are in a situation where there is an application of this passage that, if it hasn't come to you, it's coming sooner or later. Quite a few in our church family have already been confronted by this in their workplace, and they've talked to me about it. It poses a severe test of your attitude about judging people, and about people who would happily "turn and tear you to pieces." It's just one of many applications, but let me talk about this one for a moment, because I think maybe I can encourage you to know that, Number 1—you're not alone; and Number 2—there's a godly way to handle this; and Number 3—we'll walk through it together, and do our best.

What I'm referring to is the deep, acrimonious divide in our world these days on the issues of race and sexual identity. It is going to test us on whether we will stand for the truth of God's Word, *and* if—as we stand on the truth of God's Word—we will do it without being drawn into the combative attitude that is so prevalent these days. There's a lot of *baiting* that goes on, to try to get people to fight over this stuff—and we have to find a better way to talk about it (2 Tim. 2:24-26).

If you are in the business world, it is usually packaged under the label "DEI Training." DEI stands for Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion. "DEI Training" is "Critical Race Theory"—we've talked about that in the past—it is "Critical Race Theory" that defines *everyone* according to *social class* and *skin color*. It is "Critical Race Theory" being forced upon everyone, in the name of addressing racism. It's also "Intersectionality"—that idea of who is allowed to speak to different things.

Now, understand: Racism is a *terrible* evil (see Acts 10:34-35; cf. Rev. 5:9). Treating anyone anytime in any place in any circumstance differently than how you treat someone else, based upon the shade of the tone of their skin—*that is Satanic!* That is one of Satan's many attacks on the fact that "God...created him; male and female He created them" (Gen. 1:27—the whole human race (Gen. 3:20; Acts 17:26). So, please—I am *not* excusing *anybody's* mistreatment of anybody else. But, "Critical Race Theory" and "Intersectionality" is promoting a solution for racism that is fundamentally, at its core, *racist*. People don't realize that.

In "DEI Training," you will be told—and I mean, face it: on the average, we're a pretty lilywhite group, alright? Could it be different? I suppose it could. Go witness to some people with different skin color; that would be a great idea. But, in "DEI Training," you will be told that you are—by definition—innately, irrevocably, *racist* if your skin is white; and you *do not understand* that you are racist; and you have nothing of value to contribute to the discussion; and there *is no cure* for your condition. If you think I'm overstating that, come see me afterward and I'll line you up with some people who have been going through "DEI Training."

If you protest when you're told that—if you protest: "No, as a Christian, I accept what the Bible says. I reject the entire notion of multiple races, because there is only one—it's *human*. We are not different colors, we're all *one* color! Some of us look kind of anemic, some of us look kind of robust in the skin color category." And if you say, "I believe that,

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and therefore, I *reject* all treatment of people differently on the basis of skin color," you will be *immediately rejected!* You will be *shut down!* And it will be said that your attitude *proves* that you don't have a clue about the subject; you're only speaking out of you "white privilege." That's the name of a book, and it's the name of a concept.

And in that kind of training, what is therein called "Social Justice"—it's not about Biblical justice; it's not about God's justice; it's not about the Gospel at all. And when people try to bring "Critical Race Theory" into the life of the Body of Christ, *that is a horrible mistake!*

And there are some who are saying, "Well, it's not the Gospel, but it is a valuable tool for evaluating things." *No, it's not!* A jackhammer is not a valuable tool for washing your crystal; it doesn't fit, it doesn't work. It is not only *not* Biblical, it is so *antibiblical*, I'm *astounded* that anybody is accepting it!

"Social Justice"—"Critical Race Theory" applied—is about, not Biblical justice, it's about manipulating society to achieve equal *outcomes* for all. It's *not* about equal opportunity! It's *not* about equal application of law, equal application of justice. *That is a right* thing to do—not to just turn the tables upside down from what they have been (Rom. 12:17a).

I found a quote from Thomas Sowell that is wonderful. Pretty much every time this guy opens his mouth, you're liable to find a quotable quote. Thomas Sowell is an economist and a senior fellow at Stanford University's "Hoover Institution." I didn't realize until I double-checked the quote—I think He's 90 years old now! I hope he lives a lot longer. Sowell is a black man. Now, bear in mind: He's 90. He grew up in Harlem, New York. I think he understands some of the *worst* of racism, as it has been manifested in our country. I'm nowhere near 90, and *I* understand some of how it has been manifested.

The quick version of Sowell's background: He dropped out of Stuyvesant High School in New York. He served in the Marine Corps during the Korean War. He went on to get his education. He is a highly-renowned economist.

He wrote, concerning "Critical Race Theory" and the current "Social Justice" movement, this quote: "Racism does not have a good track record." Now, trust me: a 90-year-old who grew up in Harlem knows whereof he speaks. "Racism does not have a good track record. It's been tried out for a long time; and you'd think by now, we would want to put an end to it instead of putting it under management."

Listen: Racism—treating *anyone, anywhere, anytime, in any culture, for any reason, in any setting, differently* than how you treat someone else *based upon* their social status or the tone of their skin—*that is sin, always!* What's the solution to sin? It's *the Gospel!* It's not about "getting even"; you can never do that! That pendulum would go back and forth *forever!* It's about bringing people to Christ!

And by the way: in a lot of circles, when you say that, you will be written off; you'll be told: "That's your 'white privilege' talking."

Sermon Title: Specks, Logs, Dogs, and Swine
Scripture Text: Matt. 7:1-6 (Sermon on the Mount #27)

Speaker: Jim Harris
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What do you mean, "*Just* preach the Gospel"? Well, I don't mean, just preach the Gospel *and ignore the sin!* Where you have a chance to be an influence for the right thing, *be an influence for the right thing* (e.g., Eph. 5:11)—but also, preach the Gospel.

Now, friends: the momentum is building against a whole lot of things that we hold dear. This week, the United States House of Representatives passed the so-called "Equality Act." It was championed by President Biden during his campaign. He said this would be very high on his priority list, and it has been; and he has already gotten it through the House. It's *called* the "Equality Act," but it is *not anything* that treats people equally.

As passed by the House, the so-called "Equality Act" removes *all protections* for privately-owned companies, for Christian schools and Christian colleges—and you can bet, ultimately, it'll be coming to churches. It requires absolute lockstep obedience, under penalty of law, to the entire LGBTQ+ agenda. Some who are opposed to it have called it "The Homosexual Supremacy Act." It says that *we do not have the right* to hold our convictions in public (see Gen. 19:9).

And here's a tip: When you listen to people talk about it, you will not hear them talk about "Freedom of Religion"—as in, the First Amendment; you will hear them talk about "Freedom of *Worship*." What's the difference? "Well, it's okay if you guys want to come together in your little room, and you want to talk about whatever you want to talk about. That's your freedom of *worship*. But *you do not have the right* to take your conviction out into the public square and make a reasoned argument for it! *You will be a criminal* if you do!" That is the "Equality Act," and it's a steamroller that is headed our way.

Now, I've heard talk that there *will be* some concessions put into it—for freedom of *worship*—but *not* freedom to practice your religion. In other words: under the "Equality Act," *you* are the ones who are *excluded* from "equality." Under the "Social Justice" system, you're the criminals. *That's not equality!*

Now, look: That's not "homophobic." That's not *anything* "ophobic," because *I'm not afraid of those people*—of *any* people, of *any* conviction. They need *what?* A Savior! They need Christ! *That's* what they need! (see 1 Cor. 6:9-11)

And by the way: I don't know if you've noticed, but the government is working on spending some money, too. There is a giant spending bill that is coming together, making its way through Congress; they're supposed to print up 1,400 dollars for each one of us, and send it to us.

But among other things, in the name of relief from the pandemic, this spending bill eliminates the almost 50-year-old "Hyde Amendment," named after a senator who composed it after the passage of the *Roe v. Wade* decision in 1973 from the Supreme Court. The Hyde Amendment is what prevents your tax dollars from funding abortions—*gone* in that new spending bill. So, when you pay your taxes, some portion of your dollar may be going to fund the ending of the life of an unborn child.

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Friends, our society is *careening*, at breakneck speed, in opposition to nearly *everything* that we hold dear as a Christian—*fundamentally assaulting* the basic Christian worldview of our culturally-Christian nation that we have enjoyed for so long.

Now, does that get you a little riled up? When I read that stuff and hear that stuff, part of me wants to cry; part of me wants to scream; part of me wants to argue (cf. Ezek. 9:4). Why share that *now*? Well, please don't leave here *merely angered* by the direction of our society. It's inevitable! "Evil men...will grow worse and worse" (2 Tim. 3:13, NKJV). Here in America, we have had *such a bubble* of being way behind the rest of the world in the overt persecution and hatred of Christians! A quasi-Christian worldview *has been* the default setting in our society; and we're just now starting to catch up with some of the rest of the world. It's going to happen.

But, go in peace *with the message of the Gospel*. It is the *only thing* that will bring the peace that matters—"peace with God" (Rom. 5:1). And if you have "peace with God," you can have "the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension" (Phil. 4:7).

Our duty is *not* to go out and win arguments. We could go out and "fight the battles," if you will, with an attitude exactly the opposite of what Matthew 7:1-6 says. We could go out and be Pharisees! And we could *harrumph* all over the place at those evil people out there. We're not called to that mission.

And we're not called to change society. *We can't!* But if a whole bunch of people come to Christ, and it's people who form a society, that society is going to change! You say, "Well, I don't see *that* happening! I see more like, we're closer and closer than ever to the Rapture." *Me, too!* And I agree with you. But that does not negate our responsibility to take the Gospel one person at a time, to go as representatives of Jesus Christ and as "ambassadors" of the Kingdom of God, of which He is the King (2 Cor. 5:20).

We have the answer! And *it doesn't matter* if people scream at us that our answers don't matter! Because every soul that is drawn to Jesus Christ by the Spirit of God "will come" (Jn. 6:37, 44). And how will they come? They'll come by us being the ambassadors (Rom. 10:14, 17). So, let us go in peace. Specks, Logs, Dogs, and Swine. I love that one! But *most of all*, I love the Savior. Let's take His message to the world!

Father, again, how we thank You for Your wonderful goodness and grace to us in Christ. Lord, we look around us, and there is a lot that we know: as much as it breaks our hearts, how it must break Yours! But Father, we also know that You are not going to stop building Your church because the most powerful nation on the planet is careening in the wrong direction, spiritually speaking. We know that You will have Your way, and You'll have it through us. So Father, strengthen us for the task. As that song says, we cry out: "O Church, arise! Put your armor on!" We need our armor on because there are attacks all around us. But having done everything, may it be said of us that we stand firm, and that we speak truth in love, that we speak of the Savior who calls people to come and receive rest for their souls. Use us to that end, we pray. And whatever needs to change in our hearts to make us all the more useful, do it, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.