



The King's Ransom

Matthew 20:28

Text

Matthew 7:1-12

Topic

Jesus gives one rule
which we are to live by in His kingdom

Title

"One Rule to King them All"

Introduction

Throughout human history gold has signified purity, beauty and power. Calling something 'golden' means it has great quality and value.

For example the Golden Ratio is found in art, architecture and nature. It describes a rectangle with a length about one and one-half times its width. Objects using this ratio in their design seem to please the eye more than others.

Ancient Greek myths told of a time long ago when people lived in peace and happiness. Poets called it the Golden Age.

A golden age now describes a historical period of great artistic, scientific or economic progress. It can even recall a time of success and popularity for a particular industry - like the Golden Age of Radio.

As we get older we look forward to reaching our Golden Years.

In 1604 a mostly unknown writer from Cambridge University named Charles Gibbon was the first person we know of to use the word 'golden' to describe Jesus' words, "whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them..."

Gibbon called it the "Golden Rule" and it immediately caught on.

Everyone is familiar with the Golden Rule. What most people are unfamiliar with are the words that *precede* and *end* the Golden Rule.

Jesus said, in full,

Mat 7:12 Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

- "Therefore" means it is only possible to practice the Golden Rule if we heed what is revealed in the first eleven verses.
- "The Law and the Prophets" is a way of referring to the Hebrew Scriptures we call the Old Testament. Keeping the Golden Rule involves obedience to *everything* in God's Word and then some. Thus it is impossible to keep the Golden Rule on our own, without God's supernatural strength.

The Golden Rule has at its heart helping others. If I want to be a help - a real help - to my fellow man, I need to maintain a certain spiritual state, and I'll need to obtain spiritual strength.

I'll organize my thoughts around the following two points: #1 You Are To Maintain A Spiritual State In Which You Can Be Of Help To Others, and #2 You Are To Obtain The Spiritual Strength By Which You Can Be Of Help To Others.

#1 You Are To Maintain A Spiritual State In Which You Can Be Of Help To Others

(v1-6)

Have you heard of planking? It is a recent photo-fad which involves lying face down with arms to the sides in public places, photographing the scene, and then sharing the picture online.

I want to hijack the term "planking" to describe what Jesus talked about in the first five verses. You'll see it in a minute.

[Mat 7:1 "Judge not, that you be not judged."](#)

The most often misapplied words in all of the Bible might be "judge not." They are the first response anytime you confront someone with their sin who is refusing to repent.

There are plenty of verses that tell us to judge or act in judgement. Let me mention a few:

1. When disputes arise between believers, they should be settled in the church before members who can decide the matter (1Corinthians 6:1-8).

2. The local church is to judge serious sins of its members and take appropriate action (Matthew 18:17; 1Corinthians 5:9-13).
3. Believers are to judge the doctrinal teaching of teachers and preachers by the Word of God (Matthew 7:15-20; 1Corinthians 14:29; 1John 4:1).
4. Those in the church must judge which men have the qualifications necessary for elders and deacons (1Timothy 3:1-13).

If Jesus wasn't forbidding all judging, then He must have been forbidding a type of judging.

Mat 7:2 For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.

Jesus was talking about measuring ourselves by our own standards against others and judging them as deficient in order to feel superior to them.

Jesus had begun the Sermon on the Mount by referencing the behavior of the Pharisees. With regard to judging, the Pharisees were constantly comparing themselves to others and concluding by their external measures that they were superior. They looked down on others, not to lend them a hand up but to exalt themselves.

This type of judging is summed up in the words of the Pharisee who said, "God, I thank You that I am not like other men - extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess" (Luke 18:11-12).

He established his own standard of righteousness, then measured others by it in order to seem superior to them.

Consider two things about this type of judging:

1. Other people are never who we should be measuring ourselves against by our own standards. We should measure ourselves using God's standards.
2. If we are judging others by our own standards to make ourselves seem superior we are not really in a state to help those who have spiritual needs. We will disdain them, or at the very least try to 'help' them by being a very, very bad example of how to walk with The Lord.

Instead of using a *measure*, we ought to look in the *mirror*.

Mat 7:3 And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?

Mat 7:4 Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye?

Mat 7:5 Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

The Pharisees were planking. Anyone who 'planks' in this sense is a Pharisee at heart.

This is an example of Jesus' humor. It reminds me of those scenes in silent comedies where someone is carrying a long plank and knocking people and things down as he turns around, almost oblivious to the damage he is causing.

Obviously a person with a giant plank protruding from his eye cannot help remove a tiny speck in someone else's eye.

Their problem is that they don't see the plank in their own eye.
They would see it if they'd look in the mirror.

Ever look in the mirror late in the day only to discover you've had food stuck between your teeth all day?

The mirror we are to look into is God's Word. The apostle James used the analogy of the mirror as the Word of God. The apostle Paul put it this way:

2Co 3:18 But we all... beholding as in a **mirror** the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

I look into the mirror of the Word and, with the help of the indwelling Holy Spirit, am being changed to become more and more like my beautiful Lord.

You already know the word "hypocrite" was used of actors who wore a mask to portray their character. If you measure yourself by others, you're playing a part, acting out a role, wearing a mask of your own self-righteousness.

I want you to notice something. It's very important. **Your "brother" in this illustration really does have a "speck" in his eye.**

Something in your physical eye can be slightly irritating or it could be damaging, leading to blindness. It's serious.

It's even more serious in the spiritual realm. **Your brother needs help.** But you won't be any help if you are planking. You need to maintain a spiritual state in which you can be a help to others.

Mat 7:6 "Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.

What?! Where in the world did that come from?

First let's establish who Jesus meant by "dogs" and "swine." The apostle Peter was there, on the Mount, listening to The Lord. Later he would write two letters that we have in the Bible. In his second letter he talked about dogs and swine. He said they were those who once professed belief in Jesus but who turned away (we call it apostasy) from Him to return to their natural state.

He said they were dogs returning to their own vomit, and swine returning to their wallowing in the mud (Second Peter 2:22).

If you are mirroring rather than measuring, seeking to be of real spiritual help to others, you will also encounter folks who turn out to be dogs and swine. In their case you need discernment so as to not be led astray by their errors and become involved in their sin.

One commentator said, "we are sheep but we shouldn't let others pull the wool over our eyes."

There is an entire letter in the New Testament dedicated to warning you to not be led astray by apostates. It was written by Jude who said,

Jud 1:4 For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Then he exhorts us,

Jud 1:19 These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit.

Jud 1:20 But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit,

Jud 1:21 keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

Think of it this way. It is wrong to be judgmental, like a Pharisee, because then you are in no position to help those in need. But it is just as wrong to refuse to judge folks who are apostates and keep trying to help them. It diminishes the Gospel and puts you at risk.

- It's compared to taking meat sacrificed to The Lord ("what is holy") and feeding it to dogs. Not pet dogs; diseased scavengers.
- It's compared to "casting pearls before swine." Some of the grain foods swine ate were about pearl-size. If they were to eat a pearl, they'd spit it out. It had no value to them.

Nothing in these verses should confuse us; but applying it can certainly confound us a bit.

- Since my heart can be so deceitful, how do I know when I am measuring rather than looking into the mirror?
- If I am mirroring, how do I go about performing the delicate surgery of removing the speck from my brothers eye without doing any harm?

- And since other men's hearts can be so deceitful, how do I know when I am working with apostates who are seeking to draw me away from the living bread and the living water Jesus is providing into their vomit and mud?

To answer any of those questions I will need to obtain spiritual strength and empowering from The Lord.

#2 You Are To Obtain The Spiritual Strength By Which You Can Be Of Help To Others

(v7-12)

These next few verses encourage you to pray. At first glance they may seem to introduce an entirely new subject. But if you are following the Lord's train of thought, you see how vital a reminder to pray is at just this point. I won't be of any help to others, and I will put myself at risk, if I don't stay in utter and complete dependance upon God.

Mat 7:7 "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

Mat 7:8 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

Mat 7:9 Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?

Mat 7:10 Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent?

Mat 7:11 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!

I read all these verses because we need to study them backward - from what God wants to give us back to how it is obtained.

Jesus was blowing minds by constantly portraying God as a Father who was similar to, but far superior to, earthly fathers. The Jews were *never* taught to have that kind of intimacy with God.

God, as Father, wants to "give good things to those who ask Him."

The NIV translates "good things" as "good gifts." In Luke's Gospel Jesus specifies that God wants to especially give the gift of the Holy Spirit to them that ask, seek, and knock.

What I'm being promised here is that if I depend upon God He will, by His Holy Spirit and His many related gifts, help me to look into the mirror of His Word and be enabled to help others without being stumbled by those who turn out to be dangerous apostates.

A lot has been made by commentators about the present-tense, continuous asking, seeking, and knocking. If we're not careful it almost makes it seem as though God doesn't want to respond and won't unless we pester Him.

That doesn't jive with Him being our Heavenly Father who is more generous in every way than the best earthly father.

I think Jesus was emphasizing the continual setting of our heart and affections towards a dependence upon God that keeps us in constant communication.

If I am totally dependent upon Him, I'm going to always be asking.

When you hear this word, "ask," what do you immediately think of?

Probably what we call a prayer request. It is something we are asking God to grant or to do on our behalf or for someone else.

But the word itself is a more general word. It could, therefore, relate to all kinds of "asking."

Your kids - don't they ask a lot of questions? They're not always asking *for* something in the sense of a request. Sometimes it's just communication as they ask you to answer questions or to explain things. Or to play games with them, for that matter.

So, really, this is an encouragement to talk to God all the time about everything.

Someone has suggested that "seeking" is asking *plus* acting upon any answer you might receive. As I spend time in communication with - or as we like to say, in communion with - my Father, I am prompted and led to certain acts and behaviors and responses.

If "seeking" is asking *plus* acting, then "knocking" is asking *plus* seeking *plus* persevering.

Look at it this way. At any one moment in my walk with God I am **asking** Him for or about many things.

He will lead me and guide me in some specific things. I should respond obediently and **seek** to fulfill them in His power.

But I will also find myself struggling with some things, wondering "Why?," maybe even doubting Him and not understanding how all things can work together for the good. Nevertheless I persevere - **knocking**, as it were.

I guess what I'm suggesting is that rather than seeing these three things as a progression to pester God to help me, I see them as three simultaneous descriptions of my constant communion with God - my Heavenly Father who wants to give me good things.

Either way, what Jesus was promising was spiritual strength to accomplish what is impossible apart from God - applying the Golden Rule.

Mat 7:12 Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

Again I want to point out that the "Law" and the "Prophets" are shorthand for God's entire Word. The Golden Rule in no way cancels out the commandments in the Law and the character of the Prophets. It upholds them and fulfills them.

You can no easier keep the Golden Rule than you can keep every jot and title of the Law. It is equally impossible - unless you are a Christian indwelt by God the Holy Spirit.

It is important to realize the impossibility of keeping the Golden Rule apart from being saved because so many people think that all humanity needs to do is follow some version of it and societies will be transformed into Utopias.

Transform the heart and *then* you will be enabled to keep the Rule.

As to the Golden Rule, one commentator said it best when he wrote the following words:

Put yourself in another's place, and then act to him as you would wish him to act towards you under the same circumstances. This is a right royal rule, a precept always at hand, always applicable, always right. Here you may be a judge, and yet not be judging others, but judging for others. This is the sum of the Decalogue, the Pentateuch, and the whole sacred Word.

Oh, that all men acted on it, and then there would be no slavery, no war, no sweating, no striking, no lying, no robbing; but all would be justice and love! What a kingdom is this which has such a law!

We adore the King out of whose mouth and heart such a law could flow. This one rule is a proof of the divinity of our holy religion. The universal practice of it by all who call themselves Christians would carry conviction to Jew, [Muslim], and infidel, with greater speed and certainty than all the apologies and arguments which the wit or piety of men could produce.

Lord, teach it to me! Write it on the fleshy tablets of my renewed heart! Write it out in full in my life!

Here is a slightly less eloquent way of illustrating it. If I obey the posted speed limit I am certainly keeping the law. When I stop to help a stranded motorist, I am going beyond keeping the law by applying the Golden Rule.

If life is a highway, there are stranded motorists all around you. Stay in communion with God so He can use you to reveal His love to them.