

## Matthew 7 and The Closing Themes of the Sermon on the Mount

**Matthew 7** opens with one of the most famous statements of the **Sermon on the Mount**: “*Judge not, that ye be not judged.*” This injunction isn’t simply a call to avoid judgment but invites us to carefully consider how and why we judge ourselves and others. Through this chapter, the journey continues toward understanding justice, mercy, and the pursuit of a higher ideal, drawing insights from **Carl Jung** and biblical narratives.

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### Understanding Judgment: More Than Just "Not Judging"

Jesus’s words here do not prohibit all judgment but challenge us to judge **thoughtfully and humbly**. “*Judge not, that ye be not judged,*” as echoed in **Revelation**, hints at the eventual return of Christ as the ultimate judge, wielding a “sword” as a tool of separation between the worthy and unworthy, the useful and the outdated.

*"The higher the ideal, the more severely it judges you."*

### Separating Wheat from Chaff

In our interactions and evaluations, **judgment** is akin to separating wheat from chaff—discarding the unfruitful while preserving what is valuable.

1. **Wisdom in Context:** Even figures like Noah were “wise in their generations,” doing the best with what they had. This reminds us to value past wisdom while acknowledging the different contexts.
  2. **Critical Conserving:** We’re not to discard everything from the past but rather **sift through** judiciously to find enduring truths.
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## The Ideal as a Judge

Jung suggests that the Bible's **Book of Revelation** serves as a necessary narrative piece, a psychological **compensation** for the image of Christ as purely merciful in the Gospels. Here, Christ's harsh judgment reveals that ideals are inherently challenging and often painful, as they show us the gap between our current state and our highest potential.

*"Anything that is an ideal is a judge."*

1. **The Weight of the Ideal:** Ideals highlight how far we are from the ideal state, much like Cain's envy of Abel.
  2. **Two Choices:** We can either aim to **bridge the gap** toward the ideal or attempt to **destroy the ideal**, eliminating what judges us.
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## Savoring Life and Practicing Grace

Jesus calls his followers the "salt of the earth," a metaphor urging them to add *spice* to life, ensuring it is neither bland nor aimless.

1. **Justice and Mercy:** True grace balances judgment and mercy, aiming to improve without condescension.
  2. **The Role of Play:** Humor and play are markers of grace, and as **biological neotenists**, humans are wired for juvenile play, enabling us to keep the spirit of curiosity and joy alive.
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## Pearls Before Swine: A Warning on Discernment

*“Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine.”*

This statement underscores the importance of discernment when sharing our values and insights with others.

*“If you deliver the right message at the wrong time, even holy words can be used against you.”*

### **The Art of Listening**

Good communication and listening form the foundation for understanding and helping others. **Carl Rogers** emphasized that:

- **Listening with Empathy:** Summarizing someone’s thoughts to their satisfaction demonstrates deep empathy, clearing misunderstandings.
- **Understanding the Hidden Parts:** Often, unresolved traumas and complex subpersonalities interfere with honest communication.

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### **Ask, Seek, Knock: The Power of Earnest Seeking**

In another powerful teaching, Jesus advises: *“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you.”* This isn’t a promise of easy fulfillment but a call to **genuine pursuit**.

1. **To Ask Is to Seek Clarity:** Asking implies defining what we truly want and need, which takes courage and honesty.
2. **Seeking as a Lifelong Journey:** Seeking often leads us to explore unknown parts of ourselves and the world.
3. **The Symbolism of the Quest:** Like the **Holy Grail** in medieval quests or the **Snitch** in *Harry Potter*, some pursuits are valuable precisely because they beckon us to stretch beyond our current limitations.

## The Beauty of Persistent Seeking

Through stories, **Jesus's parables**, and **Renaissance art**, we see humanity's persistent search for beauty and meaning. Art embodies **the search for the divine** and shines as a guiding light, a "beacon" we're all drawn to.

1. **Beauty as a Gateway:** Music, art, and stories provide a taste of transcendent reality that helps us engage with life deeply.
  2. **Building a Relationship with the Ideal:** The journey to create or behold beauty is transformative, awakening in us a sense of wonder and purpose.
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## Practicing Ideal Listening: A Practical Guide

Listening to others, especially those we disagree with, is an exercise in humility.

**Carl Rogers** suggests:

1. **Hold Space for the Other:** Let them speak without interruption, then summarize back, showing respect for their perspective.
2. **Seek to Understand, Not to Win:** This transforms arguments into opportunities for mutual growth.

*"By listening, you help others update their own maps of reality, reducing fear and confusion."*

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## Conclusion: Embracing Humility and the Path of Improvement

The **Sermon on the Mount** isn't merely a set of ethical instructions but a **call to become our best selves** by consistently aligning our actions, judgments, and aspirations with a higher ideal.

*"To be on the right track is to be in the right place because it's a continually expanding horizon of possibility."*

We're invited to live fully present in the moment, guided by love, and constantly moving toward our **highest ideal**. True grace, discernment, and humility form the foundation for a life lived in **pursuit of the divine**—the ultimate balance of being and becoming.

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Through this journey, we grow closer to fulfilling our potential, harmonizing justice with mercy, and finding meaning in the challenges of life.