Matthew 7:6 (NIV):

> “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 turn and tear you to pieces.”

Understanding the Context

This verse is part of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount (Matthew chapters 5–7), a foundational discourse in which He outlines the ethics and principles of the Kingdom of God. In Matthew 7:6, Jesus gives a somewhat abrupt yet deeply profound warning. To fully understand it, we must explore the symbolic meaning of “dogs” and “pigs”, and the spiritual principle He was illustrating.

Why Dogs and Pigs?

In Jewish culture during Jesus’ time, dogs and pigs were considered unclean animals. They symbolized those who lived outside the covenant community of Israel, especially those who rejected God’s laws or mocked His holiness.

1. Dogs Symbol of Disrespect and Spiritual Indifference

Dogs in the ancient Near East were not typically pets as they are today. They were often seen as scavengers, roaming the streets and consuming whatever they found, regardless of its filth or value. Jesus highlights their indiscriminate nature:

> *Proverbs 26:11 (NIV):*
> “As a dog returns to its vomit, so fools repeat their folly.“

> *2 Peter 2:22 (NIV):*
> “Of them the proverbs are true: ‘A dog returns to its vomit,’ and, ‘A sow that is washed returns to her wallowing in the mud.’“

Peter applies this proverb to false teachers and those who fall away from the faith after knowing the truth. Their rejection is willful, and their nature unchanged.

Likewise, Jesus refers to this unclean behavior in Matthew 15:26–27, where a Canaanite woman begs Him to heal her daughter:

> *Matthew 15:26–27 (NIV):*
> 26 He replied, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to the dogs.”
> 27 “Yes it is, Lord,” she said. “Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table.”

Here, Jesus tests her faith using a Jewish idiom, and the woman humbly accepts the analogy revealing the contrast between true humility and arrogant rejection.

2. Pigs Symbol of Uncleanness and Carnal Living

Pigs were ritually unclean according to the Mosaic Law (Leviticus 11:7). To the Jews, swine symbolized those who wallowed in sin and filth. No matter how clean you make a pig, its instinct is to return to the mud.

> *Isaiah 65:4 (NIV):*
> “who sit among the graves and spend their nights keeping secret vigil; who eat the flesh of pigs, and whose pots hold broth of impure meat…”

This passage condemns pagan practices and the defilement associated with pig consumption, representing rebellion against God.

Spiritual Application: Discernment in Evangelism and Teaching

The core principle Jesus teaches in Matthew 7:6 is discernment knowing when to share sacred truths and when to refrain.

- The “holy things” represent the deep truths of the gospel, the Word of God, and the sacred revelations of the Kingdom.
- The “pearls” symbolize that which is precious and costly, much like the gospel itself.

> *Matthew 13:45–46 (NIV):*
> “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.”

This metaphor shows that God’s truth is precious, not to be treated carelessly or shared with those who openly mock, scorn, or trample it underfoot.

> *Proverbs 9:7–8 (NIV):*
> “Whoever corrects a mocker invites insults; whoever rebukes the wicked incurs abuse. Do not rebuke mockers or they will hate you; rebuke the wise and they will love you.”

Jesus is not telling us to judge others’ worthiness for the gospel arbitrarily. Instead, He instructs us to be wise and discerning, especially when dealing with those who are hard hearted, hostile, or blasphemous.

What This Means for Christians Today

As believers, we are called to share the gospel with all people (Mark 16:15), but not without wisdom. If someone consistently mocks, rejects, or scorns God’s Word with no desire to listen or learn, continuing to press the matter may not only be unproductive it may expose you to spiritual and emotional harm.

> *Titus 3:10–11 (NIV):*
> “Warn a divisive person once, and then warn them a second time. After that, have nothing to do with them. You may be sure that such people are warped and sinful; they are self-condemned.”

There is a time to speak, and there is a time to walk away.

In Matthew 7:6, Jesus uses the example of dogs and pigs to teach a vital spiritual lesson: sacred truths must be treated with reverence, and we must exercise discernment in how and to whom we share them. Just as a dog will not appreciate a holy offering and a pig will trample pearls, so too will certain people reject, mock, and even attack when the gospel is shared with them.

This is not a call to judge hearts but a call to use wisdom in ministry and relationships. Pray for discernment, be guided by the Holy Spirit, and always seek those whose hearts are open to receive the beauty and truth of God’s Word.

May the Lord bless you and grant you wisdom in all things.

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