Q: What is the meaning of Matt. 7:6... Not throwing our pearls to swine? What are pearls? Who are the swine? What is an example of this forbidden behavior? Does this conflict with the exhortations to preach the gospel to the lost?

A: Casting our pearls before swine refers to bringing unholy individuals into the most sacred things of Christianity under the banner of grace. For example, bringing unbelievers into our service or worship (Phil. 3). Unsaved persons cannot worship, and God doesn’t want their service. Christendom is a vast system which unites believers and unbelievers in one common forum. But there must be a separation between believers and the world. If a person is still in their sins, they are standing on the wrong side of the cross. They are still crying “away with him, crucify him”. We cannot try to enjoy Christ with someone that is hateful or even indifferent toward our Savior. What they need is the gospel.

Give not that which is holy to the dogs, nor cast your pearls before the swine, lest they trample them with their feet, and turning round rend you. (Matthew 7:6)

“Your pearls” might speak of what is most precious to Christians... worship, service, comfort, etc.1 “Dogs” are those who are unsaved (Phil. 3:2). “Swine” are morally degraded, usually false professors (2 Pet. 2:22). The “trampling of pearls” refers to the dishonor that is done to the Name of Christ when we share the precious things of Christ with unbelievers. “Turning round and rending” refers to the confusion and corruption that has invaded the kingdom of heaven because we have not maintained the distinction between holy and unholy. Here are a few examples of things to think about, although we do not want to make a law out of them:

1. Joining together with false cults (Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses) in outreach or prayer. Unity at the expense of holiness is nothing more than an unholy alliance.

2. Comforting an unsaved co-worker that “all things work together for good”... that’s only true for those who love God and are called according to His purpose.

3. Speaking about God’s sovereignty to the lost. We need to stick to man’s responsibility. God’s sovereignty is a family secret!
An example of one who failed in this is Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:13), who displayed his precious things to the embassage from Babylon. The result of Hezekiah’s carelessness was that everything he showed the Babylonians was taken away.

What about the gospel? The exhortation about not casting our pearls does not prevent us from spreading the gospel to the lost. We were all at one time unholy like the “dogs” and “swine”, and would still be enemies of Christ if it weren’t for the grace of God (1 Cor. 6:11). Yet someone loved us enough to share the gospel with us. The gospel is different. The pearls are intended for the saints, but the gospel is for the lost. Hence we have commands to preach the gospel to the lost.

Footnotes

1. William Kelly suggested that “the special affections of Christ to the Church, His loving care for His servants, the hope of His coming again, the glorious prospects of the Church as His bride, etc.” are the pearls that are reserved for Christian fellowship alone. - Kelly, William. Lectures on the Gospel of Matthew. Loizeaux Brothers, 1943.