

Sunday Sermon

11/12/23

Series: Raising the Bar

Passage: Matt. 7:1-6

Title: Judging Others

Good morning, church! Go ahead and turn in your bibles to Matthew chapter 7. Today we are going to be talking about the very practical, very inflammatory concept of judging others and what Jesus has to say about it. A quick review of where we've been. Jesus has been preaching to a group of people who believed that, if they could just be good enough, that would merit them right standing before God. Jesus says, "You could never be good enough." And throughout the sermon on the mount Jesus has been exposing that our hearts betray us concerning the issue of righteousness and he has been revealing that there is on fact a huge gap which lies between where we are and God's actual standard of righteousness, which is perfection. Therefore, we need an alternative righteous.

Now before we jump into the fun issue of judging others, I came across a survey this week and thought it would be fun to share some responses with you. The question the survey asks: What do you judge other people about?

- I judge people who don't care that they're late
- I immediately judge you if you make fun of someone who's trying
- I judge people based on their parking
- I judge people who refuse to return their shopping carts and leave them out to roll into other people's cars
- I judge people who don't wipe off the toilet seat
- I judge people who litter out their car window.
- I judge people who don't tip
- I judge people who complain about their friends behind their backs
- I judge people who don't pick up their dog's poop from other people's yards
- I judge people who have no knowledge of a certain topic, but still try to argue with the person who actually knows what they're talking about.
- I judge people for bringing children into situations that are not appropriate for children
- I judge people who talk really loudly on the phone in public
- I judge people who have no awareness of or concern for their surroundings when they're out in public. It's doesn't cost anything to wait your turn, hold a door, use a turn signal, or make room for others walking past you. It's so selfish it makes me mad just thinking about it!

And I'm not kidding, there were hundreds more. One pastor I came across this week said it this way, "Judging others is one of our favorite things to do." He's not wrong. In our passage this morning Jesus talks the issue of passing judgement and how that too exposes our hearts before the Lord. So let's jump into the text this morning and see what God has for us. **Matthew 7:1-6**

"Do not judge, so that you will not be judged."

The word used here for judgment is the word “krino.” It’s a word that means: to separate, to put down/under, to pick out, select, or choose.

When Jesus says, “Judge not.,” What he is talking about is the concept of acting the part of the Judge or the arbiter in matters of common life. In other words, you can say, “Do not act as if you are the Judge.”

Why? Well, because you’re not the Judge, but also (second half) so that others will not pass judgment on you. Because what does “krino” do? It separates. It divides. Breaks relationship. It builds a wall. It hinders an opportunity for the gospel to go forth. Opportunity for helpful conversation to happen which might lead someone toward truth or lead someone toward benefit in their life.

But in that, let’s be clear about what it’s not saying. Because this has also been twisted by many to either accuse the church or to excuse certain actions. So I want to be very clear about this.

-What this is not saying is that Christians shouldn’t have a moral compass or moral convictions as followers of Christ.

-What it is not saying is that I cannot have discernment as to what people, or influences, or actions will be helpful or beneficial or wise for me if I want to remain under God’s blessing and attached to him.

-What it is not saying is that there is no standard or bar in God’s eyes. That all things are equally acceptable, there is no more sin, that God no longer cares about sin, that sin is no longer harmful and so now all lifestyles, convictions, actions, words, or theologies are true and equal in their truth.

Jesus is not saying any of that. In fact, he is going to be very clear about that later in this chapter. But what he is saying is that, because we are not the judge, we can, while still being discerning, have relationship with those around us who are not at the same place spiritually, morally, or otherwise as we are.

In fact, as we look at the life of Jesus, that is exactly what he was. He ate with his disciples, he broke bread with sinners, he spent time with tax collectors, Romans, Samaritans, he gave of himself to the unclean, the sick, the brokenhearted, the possessed – he couldn’t have done any of that if he was acting the part of judge – separating – good/bad, clean/unclean, worthy/unworthy, beautiful/ugly, healthy/sick, rich/poor, Jew/Gentile, fill in the blank - Republican/Democrat, believer/unbeliever. Jesus didn’t have an “us verses them” mentality.

But in that, let me ask you: Did Jesus still have a moral compass? A standard of right and wrong? A conviction? A direction? Did he still not uncompromisingly call people to righteousness? And yet what was his *modus operandi*? It was love, not judgment.

But get this, this is what makes it so interesting. Unlike us who often act the part of the Judge, Jesus is the Judge, and yet what he chose because of his concern for the world was love. Now that said, scripture is quite clear, Jesus himself is quite clear, one day he will return again as Judge. But that day is not yet today. Just like scripture is quite clear that as followers of Christ

we, too, will sit in a place of judgement. That day is not yet today. Today, Christ's command is to love one another as Christ has loved us. To love our neighbors as we love ourselves. This means relationship, being patient, being gracious, and, yes, this also means being a voice of wisdom and truth when the door is opened for that – we are salt and light, it means sharing with others as opportunity presents itself, the good news of the kingdom of God (isn't that what Jesus did?).

Do not judge is not tolerance as the world pushes tolerance. This is not the embracing or acceptance of every practice under the sun. But it is keeping the opportunity open for meaningful relationship with those who don't look like us, think like us, act like us, or believe like us. After all, that's what Jesus did.

But he goes on – verse 2, ***“For in the way you judge you will be judged, and by the same standard of measurement that you measure others, it will be measured to you.”***

Now, here's an interesting question: Who is this talking about? Is it talking about the judge being judged by others or the judge being judged by God?

The answer is yes. Remember, the whole sermon on the mount is focused on the condition of a person's heart.

It is true here that Jesus is talking about interpersonal relationships. If the way you live toward others is that you are a separator, an attacker, a divider – then you will be judged by others in the same way.

The way of the flesh is not to overcome evil with good. The way of the flesh is to reciprocate brokenness with more brokenness. So if I approach you as judge, you're going to approach me the same way. If I'm hostile toward you, you are going to be hostile toward me. See, Judgment here implies having a harsh and critical spirit. If that is how you operate with others, don't be surprised when that is returned to you.

That is true, and yet, the whole of the sermon on the mount is focused on our relationship with God. In context, that hasn't changed, so we also need to understand what Jesus is saying about our hearts in relation to God here. ***“In the way you judge, you will be judged. By your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.”***

This issue of judgment is again exposing our need for an alternative righteousness before the Lord, because he is saying, “Listen, you don't even measure up to the standard you are placing on others. We just talked about that. Where's your heart? Where's your treasure? How's your anxiety? How do you think about money, possessions, image? How's your anger? Your thought life? Your promise keeping? Your faithfulness? Your selfishness? Your God-like love?” How are you doing?

In other words, “What do you expect them to be doing better (whoever they are)?” Are you doing it perfectly? How righteous do you think you are by the standard of law? So, here's the truth in this: **If we are going to measure others by that standard of law-based righteousness, then are hearts have not yet awoken to the truth that we all fall short. And because of that, it will be by that same standard of law-based righteousness that God, who is Judge, will judge us.**

You say, "I need a verse for that." I got two. Romans 3:19-20, **"Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by the works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin."**

All fall short, therefore, we need an alternative righteousness. I'm not just making this stuff up. This is what the truth of scripture proclaims. Look at what the very next verse in Romans 3. It says, **"But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law."** – God has made available to the world an alternative righteousness. It's the whole reason why Jesus Christ was sent. It is what he is exposing and pointing to in the sermon on the mount. Next verse, "the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe." We asked last week, "Who is this guy?" John the Baptist says, **"Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!"**

Here's the gospel starting with Jesus' truth in the sermon on the mount: (23) **"For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, and are** justified (that's a legal word. It means: a gracious and judicial act of God whereby a person is granted complete absolution from all guilt and a full release from the penalty of sin) **by his grace as a gift, through the redemption** (buying back) **that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation** (an exchange – an atoning sacrifice that absorbed the judgment of God against us so that we might be set free) **by his blood, to be received by faith."**

Listen: As the holy One of God, Jesus is both our judge and justifier. But this is the gospel, through the cross he freely extends that gift of justification to you and me. Will you accept it this morning? Will you follow him as Lord and Savior? He won't force you. You can choose against him, but he wants you. And he wants your heart.

This is really what verse 3-5 are about. The speck in the other's eye is the right action – that thing the other isn't doing properly. That they need to shape up about. The log in your own eye is the reality of the gap in righteous action between yourself and God's holy standard.

The apostle Paul says, **"Of all sinners who have ever lived, I'm the worst."** Really Paul? The worst? How could you say that? It's this concept. He is looking at other people only in terms of their individual actions - right or wrong. That's all I can see. It's the speck. But when I step back to take a look at myself and my own heart in relationship to God's holy standard, then what I see is the gap. And it's bigger than a single right action.

But look at verse 5, because I think this can be helpful to us as Christians trying to be salt and light in the world, trying to be a voice of God's truth, love and wisdom. Look at what it says. It doesn't say, "Don't ever try to help people who are doing the wrong thing." It doesn't say, "Tolerate everything because God no longer has a standard of living." What does Jesus say? He says, **"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."**

Eyes up here: **We are supposed to take the speck out of our brother's eye.** That is part of our being salt and light in a dark world. James says, ***“My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.”*** That's good work. That's God-work. That's what he did for us. That's what he commissions us to do for others.

But what we are trying to avoid is the first part, where Jesus says, ***“You hypocrite.”*** Because salvation is not an action issue, it's a heart issue. And righteousness is not an action issue, it's a heart issue. Those of us who understand what grace is know that.

Bill Gillham gives us the biblical definition of the word “hypocrisy” in his book “Lifetime Guarantee.” This is helpful because I think we often get it wrong. You see, the world defines the word hypocrisy as ***“acting contrary to how you feel.”*** I feel sad, but I'm going to act happy. That's hypocritical. I feel unfulfilled, but I'm going to work hard as though I love my job. The world says, “That's hypocrisy.” Just leave your job, man. Be true to yourself, man.

But that's not how scripture defines hypocrisy. Anywhere where hypocrisy is talked about in scripture it is not going after acting contrary to how you feel, but scripture would define hypocrisy as ***“acting contrary to who you are.”***

Who were the main group of people who Jesus called hypocrites? The scribes and Pharisees. The religious leaders of the day who claimed to have hearts set on God but they weren't. Who claimed to know the way to God but didn't. Who claimed to have righteousness but had none. Who claimed to have knowledge and wisdom, but Jesus says you don't even have a right view of what's going on around you.

That's a hypocrite.

So when Jesus says it here in 7:5 what he is looking at is the blind leading the blind. He says, “Figure out how to resolve your gap first, and then you will be able to see more clearly how to help your brother or sister.”

And in that, we end with the truth of verse 6. Because what we will find is that some just don't want help. And even beyond that, we may find that some even mean to cause us harm. Some don't want wisdom. Some don't want God. Some are not interested in truth. Let me keep my speck. Like a pig doesn't want a pearl. Even though pearls are valuable, pigs don't care. They want food. And since pearls are not that, they'll spit them out and trample them into the mud. Some people are of that mind when it comes to the truth of God and the gospel.

But in that, it's important that how we interact with them doesn't become the wedge or the stumbling block that pushes them further away from the Lord.

When it comes to the issue of judging others, hear me, religiosity isn't what is going to compel a person toward God. Right action isn't going to compel that person toward the cross. What might? Encountering God's truth in love. Encountering your living testimony of his amazing grace.

Living out of the truth of who you are. I was far from the Lord, undeserving and hopeless, yet he came and found me.

There are lots of things we can judge others about, Thomas a Kempis said, **“Gladly we desire to make other men perfect, but we will not amend our own fault.”** - Thomas a Kempis, *Imitation of Christ*

Jesus says, “Start with log. Resolve the gap. Figure out grace, and then go get others in love.”



RAISING

THE BAR

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

“Do not judge, so that you will not be judged.”

- Matt. 7:1

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“Krino” - to separate, to put down/under, to pick out, select, or choose.

“I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is going to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom...”

- 2 Tim. 4:1

***“Or do you not know that the saints will judge
the world...Do you not know that we are to judge
angels?”***

- 1 Cor. 6:2-3

“For in the way you judge you will be judged, and by the same standard of measurement that you measure others, it will be measured to you.”

- Matt. 7:2

“Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by the works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.”

- Romans 3:19-20

“But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law...”

- Romans 3:21

***“The righteousness of God through faith in
Jesus Christ for all who believe.”***

- Romans 3:22

“The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.”

- Romans 3:22

“Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!”

- John 1:29

“For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.”

- Romans 3:23-25

“Why do you see the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you says to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the log 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.”

- Matt. 7:3-5

“My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.”

- James 5:19-20

“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.”

- Matt. 7:5

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“Do not give to dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn and attack you.”

- Matt. 7:6

**“Gladly we desire to make other men perfect,
but we will not amend our own fault.”**

- Thomas a Kempis, *Imitation of Christ*