

Message #26**Luke 6:37-45**

When I was a boy, we had the most beautiful and majestic tree in our backyard. The tree stood on the side of a hill and towered above the other trees. It was a picture of strength and majesty. One night a major storm hit our area and either the wind or lightning hit that tree and it snapped. As we went out to look at it, we discovered that the inside of it was completely rotten. What looked to be most impressive on the outside was rotten on the inside. The internal didn't match the external.

Back in the days of Jesus Christ, there was a group in the Bible who were exactly the same way. They were known as Pharisees. When you looked at the external, when you looked at the outside, they appeared to be impressive. They seemed to be the picture perfect ideal of religious strength and majesty. They wore impressive religious clothes. They could pray eloquent prayers and they had their rules and traditions that were rock solid. When they got around other people, they seemed to spiritually tower above them. But when you looked at the inside of them, they were rotten to the core. The internal did not match the external. They were self-righteous hypocrites. **Jesus Christ was surrounded by these guys and they wanted Him dead (Luke 6:7, 11). Pharisees love to play God!**

One thing is very certain; Jesus Christ NEVER wanted any of His disciples to become some Pharisee. That is one title no true disciple ever wants. One of the things for which the Pharisees were known was their hyper-critical, judgmental attitude toward sinful people. The Pharisees were quick to point out the faults, the failures and the sins of others. They were quick to judge and quick to condemn both the sin and the sinner. They were always interested in judging others, but never interested in judging themselves. Christ never wanted His disciples to become like that so what He says in this text is this:

DISCIPLES OF JESUS CHRIST MUST NOT EVER FUNCTION AS PHARISAICAL JUDGES, BUT AS MERCIFUL MINISTERS.

If you are a Pharisee, probably this exposition will really upset you. Pharisees believe their primary responsibility is to act as judge and jury over sin in the lives of people and in society. Now there is a place for making judgments; however, before someone does that, he must examine his own life and that is not what Pharisees are willing to do.

Now there are seven key teachings that Jesus Christ gives to His disciples and all seven are specifically designed to prevent a disciple from becoming a Pharisee:

TEACHING #1 – Judgmental disciples will be judged. 6:37a-b

Christ opens this up by using the verb “judge” two times. The word “judge” and “condemn” are legal courtroom terms that refer to one who is in a position to judge a person and has the authority to pass sentence on a person in view of the judgment.

In Greek, the present imperative with the negative prohibition means “stop judging” and “Stop condemning.” The action was in progress. In other words, this was happening.

The Pharisees set themselves up as the judge and jury over all the people and all the sin. They elevated themselves to the position of playing God and judging and condemning sinners. As Jesus said they seated themselves in Moses’ seat (Matt. 23:2). In other words, they became the law, judge and jury over all people. Most of their judgments were not based on the Word of God, but on their rules and traditions that were not in the Word of God.

Now in coming to terms with a true Biblical perspective of this, there are six Biblical judgment matters we want to consider:

- 1) Every person is going to be judged by Jesus Christ even if they never judged anyone. This is true for a believer (II Cor. 5:10) and this is true for an unbeliever (Rev. 20:12).
- 2) There are times when judgment is legitimate and demanded, specifically concerning a brother (Luke 17:3; Rom. 16:17).
- 3) There are times when not judging a brother is wrong (I Cor. 5:12-6:5).
- 4) There are times when we must judge and not let people into our house or lives (II John 10).
- 5) There are to be judgments made concerning fruit in a person’s life (**Luke 6:43-45**).
- 6) There are times when specific leadership judgments are to be made (**Luke 11:42-44**).

What these Biblical texts tell us is that there are times when judgments are to be made. Jesus is not saying we should, as one writer said, “suspend the faculty of judgment” (David Garland, *Luke*, p. 283). The contextual point concerns judging others without being willing to judge and analyze self. When one makes judgments one must first be willing to examine his own life in light of the truth of God and Word of God (Gal. 6:1).

But that is not what the Pharisees were doing. Pharisees do not deal with things in their own lives, but they loved to judge other people. A Pharisee is willing to condemn someone else but never self. A Pharisee sees himself as always right, but God sees him as always wrong. Dr. Richard Lenski said, “What Christ forbids is the self-righteous, self-exalting and hypocritical judging which is false in its very nature.”

A true disciple of Jesus Christ does not have a ministry devoted to rigid condemnation, but one devoted to merciful acquittal. Jesus said, “And if anyone hears my sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world” (John 12:47).

There are many people in churches who have been duped into believing that their primary job is to run around as a self-righteous Gestapo and judge and condemn the world. Christ says to His disciples don’t do that. Don’t think like that and don’t minister like that.

TEACHING #2 – Pardoning disciples will receive a pardon. **6:37c-38**

The idea of pardoning someone is the idea of releasing them and setting them free. Obviously the implication is that the true disciples present the pure grace of God message that one may be set free and released from all sin. We must be slow to condemn, but quick to forgive.

What Christ is saying is that the type of ministry you are to have as My disciple is one that reaches out to others and presents grace and mercy. It is a ministry that is about communicating that people may be set free from their sin, guilt, burdens and condemnation.

In fact, Christ goes on to say that God will implement a judgment law of reciprocity. In the same way that a disciple ministered in grace and mercy is the same way God will generously deal with us.

Those disciples who are merciful and gracious will discover God's grace and mercy will generously be poured out to them.

One thing we want to point out in light of Paul's instruction and that is the reason we are merciful and forgive is because we have already been forgiven (Eph. 4:32). We demonstrate grace and mercy to others because that is what God has done with us. Even James said, "mercy triumphs over judgment" (James 2:13).

TEACHING #3 – Blind disciples cannot possibly lead. **6:39**

Jesus gives a parable designed to teach who is worth following and who isn't. A disciple who is a judgmental Pharisee and is a legal critical and condemnatory judge, is not a person you want to follow because he is blind to the truth of God; he is blind to his own spiritual condition and he will lead you the same way.

The Palestine topography makes this parable even more powerful. Palestine has rugged terrain. It is filled with holes, pits and wells, which, if one is not careful, one could be easily hurt. If one were to fall into one of the pits, you may not get out. Joseph was put in a pit and he could not get out (Gen. 37:20, 24).

Now even a person with excellent eyesight would not go for a walk in the moonlight if one did not know the area well. Christ uses an absurd illustration. Christ says if you were to take a blind man and tell him to lead another blind man, both would end up in one of those pits and come to harm.

Christ's point is that if a disciple is not examining and recognizing his own sinfulness and not recognizing his own need for grace and forgiveness, he is a Pharisee not worth following because he will lead others into the same theological blindness and heretical pit. It will lead others to bondage, despair and destruction. Pharisees are proud, arrogant and blind. Religious Pharisees are heading to the pit of hell and they are leading others into the same pit.

The lesson is plain to see. Do not follow self-righteous, critical religious people. Follow those who grasp grace and communicate grace. Follow those who admit their own lack and don't pretend to be holier than thou. Follow those who point you to the grace of God found in Jesus Christ.

Albert Barnes said if you choose to follow the Pharisaical mentality, it is your free choice and you will be answerable for it. And if you choose to follow that mentality you deserve to come to ruin in a pit.

A true disciple sees God, himself, and others clearly. He consistently works on his own life and consistently attempts to minister the truth of the grace of God.

TEACHING #4 – No disciple is above His teacher. **6:40**

Here is a profound truth that we all need to grasp, which can influence us for the rest of our lives. Jesus Christ was the greatest teacher who ever walked on this earth and those who claim to be His disciples have a mandate to follow Him and learn the truth of the Word of God.

The implication from **verse 40** is that it is possible and it is expected that a disciple will become a serious student and pupil of Scriptures and of Jesus Christ.

Now the first part of the statement is this: “No disciple is above being a pupil and certainly no pupil is above Jesus Christ the teacher.”

Now the second part of the statement is that when a student has been “fully trained” he will be like his teacher.

So the question that becomes paramount to this context is this: “Did Jesus Christ come the first time to condemn and judge or did He come to offer grace and save?” “Did Jesus Christ come the first time to be the judge of sinners or a friend and Savior to sinners?”

The answer is obvious. So if a disciple thinks his primary job is to judge and condemn and stamp out sin, he is placing himself above his teacher. You can know with certainty that this person has not been “fully trained.”

In my first ministry in DeMotte, I was part of a local ministerial group for a while that seemed to me to be comprised of some Pharisee types who always wanted to go on some crusade against certain types of sinners in the community. One of the things they wanted to do was to put in the bulletin the names of businesses they deemed as ungodly. The proposal was made and about to be approved and being the new kid on the block, I didn't want to make waves, but finally I said, “I don't think this is the type of thing we should be doing as ministers.” One man became very irate and demanded that I defend my position. I said, “Well, if we are to be followers of Jesus Christ, it seems to me that our responsibility is to reach out to sinners and not publicly condemn them.”

Well, that opened up a can of worms. The motion was tabled and later, one of the ministers came and said, “You know that is right; we are wrong.”

If you think your job is to continually judge sin, you are placing yourself above Jesus Christ. When you grasp grace and when you communicate grace, you have been “fully trained.” If you really want a sin-judging ministry, work on your own life you will find plenty of work there.

TEACHING #5 – All disciples should evaluate themselves. **6:41-42**

Here is where a Pharisee really becomes upset. A Pharisee has his own private rebellion, struggles and sins and he is not willing to honestly confront them. **He is too self-righteous and hypocritical to honestly examine and judge his own life.**

A Pharisee is in the same manure pile as everyone else, but he won't admit it. He smells the same to God, but he can't smell himself. A Pharisee is quick to point out the failures of others, but never willing to analyze his own life.

Christ says don't be like that. True disciples honestly work on their own lives before they make any judgment about another.

TEACHING #6 – A good or bad disciple may be determined by fruit. **6:43**

True disciples will influence others. If one is influencing others to be gracious, forgiving, kind and merciful to sinners, he will influence others to be serious about God's Word in his own life.

On the other hand, some rigid, legalistic, proud, arrogant, religious leader will produce others just like him.

Now what this should prompt any person to do if they are right with God, is look at their own lives to determine what kind of fruit they are bearing. People interested in being right with God will so self-analysis, be self-critical and make self-corrections.

TEACHING #7 – A good or bad disciple may be determined by speech. **6:44-45**

Jesus is stressing two categories of hearts of people, the good and the evil. There are people who, from God's perspective, have good clean hearts. There are others who have bad, evil, filthy hearts. James really picked up on this theme and developed it in James 3:1-18. He said that a person's tongue was a fire that opened up the very world of iniquity (James 3:6). He also said you can't tame your tongue on your own. You need the work of Jesus Christ in your heart.

What is truly in the heart will eventually pour out through the mouth. You will soon be able to tell what is going on in your own heart and also what is going on in the heart of people. All you have to do is listen to what they say.

Bad hearts say bad things. Evil hearts produce evil speech. Godly hearts produce godly speech. If you hear people constantly talking about people behind their backs and pointing out all their flaws, and saying negative things about them, you can know with absolute certainty their hearts are not right with God. They have a serious heart problem and they are heading to judgment with it.

We will all be judged by Jesus Christ. The last thing we ever want Him to say is that you were a hypocritical, judgmental Pharisee.