

SERMON ON THE MOUNT-JUDGING
Matthew 7.1-5

- 1-*“Do not judge or you too will be judged.*
- 2- *for in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.*
- 3-*Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?*
- 4-*How can you say to your brother, Let me take the speck out of your eye, “when all the time there is a plank in your own eye?*
- 5-*You hypocrite, first take a plank out of your own eye, then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”*

We continue today with our series on a Christian’s DNA
Our DNA helps predict and produce our Christian conduct.

The last two weeks Pastor Eldon has talked about showing love and not worrying.

This week Jesus warns us with these simple words **“Do not judge...”** (Matt 7.1a)
These simple words are sometimes not always so simple to understand?

Let’s ask some questions this morning,
and the first question is, **IS IT RIGHT TO JUDGE?**

The very practical answer and a Biblical answer to that question is yes.
There are over 700 references to judging in the Bible.

How would you make a decision about voting if you didn’t judge the candidates?
How would you make a decision about anything if you didn’t make a judgment?.

Think about raising your children.
You and I need to provide boundaries and guidelines for them.
I know we have the most beautiful babies and the most perfect children.
But I’d be willing to bet they need a little correction once and a while.

In the classroom, band room, or locker room wouldn’t a student, musician,
or player benefit from encouragement and some constructive criticism?

Sure they would and if taken rightly and worked on,
their performance would probably be better,
they might have a greater sense of accomplishment,
and they might please themselves and others.

It is really not so different in the church or in our spiritual lives.
we all need guidelines and direction, encouragement and correction.

We need the church family to help strengthen us when we are tempted,
corrected when we're corrupted,
and encourage in our faith, as we return from a fall.

Most of us find it difficult to confront others
about their character, conduct, or consequences of their conduct,
about their doctrine, use of drugs, or drunkenness.
We feel uncomfortable trying to talk about abortion or adultery.
It is embarrassing to mention sex before marriage or sex with the same sex partner.
We don't want to say more, or we give the gossip and the liar more to say.

When we do confront others about their beliefs and behavior,
we often feel unloving and uncaring,
yet that confrontation might be the most caring thing we can do.

And then it hurts to hear, "You have no right to judge me!"
Or "how dare you judge me! It's none of your business!"

Or "Who made you God" "Didn't Jesus say, you're not suppose to judge."
What a bunch of hypocrites!!! (and sometimes we are)

So what do we do?
Well, we either we continue to come off too strong, too insensitive, or too self-righteous.
And that isn't what God wants.
Or we tend to back off.
We shutter and stutter in retreat?
Our mantra becomes, "We're not suppose to judge..."
And that is not what God wants.

Neither of those approaches are scriptural.
The question isn't "To Judge or not to Judge?"
The question is how to judge.

In I Corinthians 5.1 Paul actually gets very upset with the Corinthian church
because they don't confront an unrepented sin in the church.

He goes on to say, "***What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church?
Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside.***" (I Cor 5.12-13)
We have a God-given responsibility to "judge" one another as people of faith.

So what do we really need?
Some 3000 years ago King Solomon answered the Lord,
***"Here is what I want. Give me a God-listening heart, so I can lead your people well.
discerning the difference between good and evil."*** (I Kings 3.9)

We need to be able to discern the difference between good and evil.

Noted Theologian and new Seminarian Don Dinger says it this way,
“Judging isn’t the question, we’re to use good judgment.”

The question is not, “To Judge or not to Judge.” It is how to judge.

So let’s ask **WHAT DOES “DO NOT JUDGE” REALLY MEAN?**

In the time of Jesus the Pharisees and scribes dominated and dictated the religious scene.
They were very judgmental and self-righteous.
They were curt with their criticism.
They lacked kindness and compassion in their complaints.
Their “Holier Than Thou” attitudes put the common people down.

Jesus not only wanted to free people from their sin,
but he wanted to free them from condemnation, guilt, and shame as well.

John 3.17 tells us that “*Jesus came not to condemn, but to save.*”
That’s good news. Actually that is great news.

Jesus encouraged people, he encourages you and I today, he encourages any and all
who are oppressed and overwhelmed by legalism in Matt 11.28 to,
“*Come unto me all who are burdened and heavy laden and I will give you rest.*”

In the Message it comes out like this,
“*Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me.
Get away with me and you’ll recover your life.
I’ll show you how to take a real rest.
Walk with me and work with me, watch how I do it.
Learn the unforced rhythms of grace.
I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you.
Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.*”

It is surprising the teachers of Jesus time didn’t do better because they knew better.
The rabbis taught that there were six great works that would profit a person;
1-to study, 2-to visit the sick, 3-to be hospitable, 4-to be devoted in prayer,
5-to educate your children in the law, and 6-to think the best of other people.

One of the best way to think best of others is, ‘to judge other people favorably.’”

The Rabbis said it this way,
“He who judges his neighbor favorably will be judged favorably by God.”

So the positive spin on, “**Do not judge,**” is “**to judge others favorably.**”

Jesus is saying that when we judge...we should not judge others
with that "holier than thou" attitude,
We should not complain or condemn,
We should not be critical or condescending,
We should not be demeaning or to be derogatory,
We should not be malicious or mean spirited.
We should not moan and groan or whine, whimper, and whisper about others.
We should not nag or nit-pick,
And we should not to be picky or punitive in our judgments of others.

Our third question, SO WHY? WHY SHOULD WE JUDGE FAVORABLY?

FIRST, WE'RE TO JUDGE FAVORABLY BECAUSE WE WANT TO BE JUDGED FAVORABLY.

Jesus tells us in the text for today, "*do not judge, for in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.*"(Matt 7.1)

The Message says it like this, "*Don't pick on other people, jump on failures, criticize their faults, unless of course you want the same treatment.*"

If Jesus were here he might want to ask you and I, "How do you want to be treated?"
We'd probably say favorably.
He would probably say, "Treat others favorably."

Then he might ask, "How do you want to be judged?"
I'd say fairly and favorably!
He'd say, "Then judge others fairly and favorably."

He might ask, "Do you want to be condemned?" I'd say, "not **on** your life."
He'd say, "Then don't condemn others.
And by the way, it can only **be because** of my life that you're not condemned.
"I endured the suffering and the shame for the joy to be found.
and now there is no condemnation for those in me."

And he might even ask, "Do you want to be forgiven?"
I'd say, "You bet!"
What do you bet he would say, "Then forgive others."

We pray every Sunday "*forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those that have trespassed against us.*"

Galatians 6.2 concurs, "*If someone falls into sin, forgivingly restore him, saving your critical comments for yourself.
You might be needing forgiveness before the day's out.*"

Paul takes this one step farther in Romans 2.1 and following,
***“You have no excuse, you who pass judgment on some else
for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself,
because you who pass judgment do the same thing.”***

The Message Bible says it this way,
***“Those people are on a dark spiral downward.
But if you think that leaves you on high ground
where you can point your finger at others, think again.
Every time you criticize someone you condemn yourself.
It takes one to know one.”***

An image that comes to mind for me is that when you point your finger at others,
you are pointing one finger at them and there are three pointed at you,
thus you condemn yourself.

We judge favorably that we might be judged favorably.

**SECOND, WE'RE TO JUDGE FAVORABLY
BECAUSE ONLY GOD CAN JUDGE RIGHTLY**

Psalm 9.7-9, ***“The Lord reigns, executing judgment from His throne.
He will judge the world with justice and rule the nations with fairness.”***

God makes a better judge than we do.
So, if God chooses to lead people
to repentance with patience and kindness.
we should try as the people of God to judge with patience and kindness
and simply trust God to redeemed, restore, and reconcile people in right relationship.

Romans 2.7, ***God is kind but He is not soft.
In kindness he takes us firmly by the hand and leads us into a radical life-change***

In II Timothy 2.24+ Paul says to Timothy, ***the Lord's servants must not quarrel,
instead be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful...
gently instruct in the hope that God will grant them repentance
leading them to a knowledge of truth, that they will come to their senses...”***

Ok. How I know you'll think I'm crazy but let's try this.
Tighten your fist. Hold it tight. Don't open it.
Let's let it be some deep dark sin or sorrow a person wants to hang on too.
Their heart is hardened.

Now try to open it with the other hand..
Tug, pull, hit, hammer...get your fist open anyway you can.
Did it work? It might only because one person is stronger than the other.
But it didn't open willingly.
It only makes the person try to hold on longer.

OK, one more time. Take your fist again.
Now rub it lightly with the other hand.
Tickle your fist. Talk nicely to your fist.
I know, I know you think I'm crazy but judge me favorably.

Did you get the fist open?
Maybe or maybe not but I'm pretty sure you wanted to.
We need to trust God's kindness and compassion.

Ephesians 3.20-21 "***God can do anything you know-
far more than you could imagine, guess, or request in your wildest dreams.
He does it not by pushing us around but by working within us,
His Spirit gently and deeply within us.***"

THIRD-WE'RE TO JUDGE FAVORABLY BECAUSE WE CAN'T JUDGE RIGHTLY

***"Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye
and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?
How can you say to your brother?
Let me take the speck out of your eye, when all the time there is a plank in your own eye?"***(M7.3-4)

Psychologist would call this projection.
Projection is "projecting" on to others,
seeing in others something you don't like in yourself.
You may or may not be aware of what that issue is.

We tend to look at people and circumstances from our brokenness and our biases,
our prejudices and our pain, from what we know or think we know.

Once upon a time when we were playing baseball in the yard.
I remember a kid who was about three or four years older than us.
His name was Tony. We'd probably been "discussing" quietly or not so quietly a call.
You know who was out and who was safe.
Tony interrupted our little chat and got in our faces.
He screamed, "I hate people who scream."
Hummm...oh really.

Paul exposes our motive
Romans 2.3, "***Judgmental criticism of others is a well-known way
of escaping detection in your own crime and misdemeanors.
4-But God isn't so easily diverted.
He seems to see right through your smoke screen
and holds you to what you've done.
5-You didn't think, did you, that just by pointing your finger at others
you would distract God from seeing all your misdoings
and from coming down on you hard?
6-Or did you think that because He is such a nice God, he'd let you off of the hook.***

It is easier for us to be critical of others than change something in ourselves

Lucy from the cartoon strip Peanuts sums this up pretty well.
She has been known to be quick to find a fault or two in others.
Well, one day Linus asks her, "Why are you always so anxious to criticize me?"
Lucy responds, "I just have a knack for seeing other people's faults."
Linus then asks, "Well, what about your own faults?"
Lucy, "I just have a knack for overlooking them."

**FOURTH, WE'RE TO JUDGE FAVORABLY
BECAUSE WE DON'T KNOW EVERYTHING**

John 7.24 says, "*Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment.*"

We shouldn't judge a book by its cover.
We can't see the whole picture.

We don't know a person's strengths and weaknesses.
We don't know what they've gone through.
They've survived. They might have come along way already.

A young and very successful businessman
was driving his brand spanking new black jaguar down the street.

Bang! Brick hits car!
Brakes screech! Gears thrown in reverse!
Tires squeal! Brakes screech!
Door flies opens! Driver jumps out!
Thud! The brick thrower is thrown against the car.

Then follows a litany of words,
some we do understand, some we don't understand,
and some we do understand but we wish we didn't understand..

Some of the words were about a dumb so and so kid,
some were about a brick, and some about a new car,

The kid mumbles between sobs, "I'm sorry, I didn't know what else to do.
It's my brother, his wheelchair rolled off of the curb and he fell out.
NO one would stop. I didn't know what else to do.
He is hurt and he is too heavy for me.
Would you help get him in back in his wheel chair."

Sometimes we need a brick to help us stop long enough and see what is going on.

And our last question, **SO WHAT DO WE DO ABOUT JUDGING FAVORABLY**

There is a pastor in Kansas City that has a very practical solution.

You buy a purple bracelet that says, "For A Complain Free World."

Then every time you complain you move it to the other wrist.

If you do not move it for 21 days you're cured,
you've establish the habit of "not complaining."

That is a wonderful idea and may help but God has a few ideas too.

***"You hypocrite. First take the plank out of your own eye,
and then you'll see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."***

We need help to do that.

So First, **REQUEST**

as Solomon did, the wisdom to know the difference between good and evil.

Ask the Spirit of God to "*search your heart and try your thoughts.*"

Second, **"REMOVE the plank from your own eye."**

Take inventory of yourself-judge yourself ,

Ask what do you need to change?

If someone is critical of you-check out the issue,

there may be some truth to the criticism..

Take any feelings of anger, resentment, or shame to God.

Third, **REPENT**

Repent of the sin of judging unfavorably.

Repent of the sin of putting others down so you can be put up.

Fourth, **REMEMBER**

Remember YOU ARE A CHILD OF GOD.

Then we are to behave like a child of God.

Praise God for who you are.

Fifth, **RESTORE**

And ask God to help you see the best in others.

Ask God to help you judge others favorably.

Be ready to help others.

Galatians 6.1, ***"Brothers if someone is caught in sin,
you who are spiritual should restore him gently."***

Let's pray.

Let's stand and sing the prayer "Breathe On Me Breath of God."

