

Matthew 6:5-15 Warning Against Judgmentalism

Good morning. My name is Matthew, one of the pastors here. It is a joy to gather with you and bring the Word of Christ to you. Welcome to Harvest is this is one of your first times visiting with us, believers and unbelievers, we welcome you.

The most dangerous enemy is the enemy you don't know exists. When our family moved into our house a year ago, for inspections they made us get a radon test. Because our house is split level with half the house being under ground, its particularly susceptible to gas that comes up from the ground. Radon is the second leading cause of the most deadly form of cancer, lung cancer. What makes it so dangerous is that Radon is odorless, colorless, and tasteless. You can have absolutely no idea that it exists. That's kind of scary. It could come in and completely destroy a home without you knowing it.

The same reality exists in the spiritual realm. We can be blind to the cancer that is within us until it is too late. This morning we are continuing our walk through the gospel of Matthew, and Jesus draw our attention to the deadly toxic poison of being judgmental. For some context, King Jesus is establishing the kingdom ethic in this sermon, He's shown how we are to relate to our selves, to God in His law, to religious practice, to money and possessions, and now in Chapter 7 He is going to end the main body of his sermon dealing with our relationships to one another.

What Jesus wants to do is eradicate judgmentalism from our hearts and eradicate it from the community of faith. There is hardly anything more destructive to true christian community than this attitude.

1. The judgmental are blind to God

7:1 "Judge not, that you be not judged. 2 For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.

The first thing we need to do is define our terms, and we can't simply ask what Webster thinks or what our culture thinks, we have to ask what the Bible says. The verb to judge has been hijacked by the non-christian culture and people at large have given the verb its own set of definitions. This verse even, you could say, is one of the most quoted verses in all the Bible, not because people are trying to proclaim Christ, but because they are attacking the behavior of Christians. These non-christians have come in and think that they know better how to interpret the Bible than Christians do.

And how do they interpret the verb, judge. What non-believers will say is that we are to not make any claims about right or wrong. We are to be wishy-washy. We are to not hold to an objective morality. The worst thing that you could do is to tell someone else that their manner of life is not right, much less that they are a sinner. "Who are you to judge me?" is the refrain. All categories of sin are to be done away with. And they point to this verse, as if this verse, were saying that. But these people don't read any more of their Bibles than this extrapolated verse that they have read in a blog somewhere, completely divorced from any other Biblical context.

Does Jesus really mean that we are not to make judgements?

You only have to read down a couple verses into v.5 that seeing clearly involves recognizing sin in a brother. In v. 6 we are told to make judgements about some humans that Jesus calls dogs and pigs. In v. 15 we are told to be on guard against false prophets, and that we should inspect their fruit to see if they are of God or of the devil. The entire sermon on the mount is couched in believers having a righteousness that exceeds the pharisees, and that exceeds the world. And failure to obey Jesus results in eternal judgement.

In Matthew 18 Jesus gives specific instructions on judging a brother that is caught in sin in the process of what we would call restorative church discipline.

Paul admonishes the Corinthians to judge one of their own who is not repenting from sexual immorality. In the first chapter of Galatians that anyone who is preaching a different gospel than his should be cursed. He tells

Timothy that he's handed Hymenaeus and Alexander over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme. 1 John tells us to test the spirits, are they of God or of the Devil?

So it is clear, that what Jesus does not mean here by judging others, is that we drop our moral standards and become pushovers. Morality is not a private affair. We fight for God's morality everywhere.

So then what does Jesus mean by telling us not to judge others?

When Jesus says do not judge, He means, do not have a judgmental attitude. What's the difference between judging and being judgmental? A lot.

Being judgmental is the evil way in which someone judges. Making judgements about right or wrong is godly, separating good from evil is godly, but doing so with a critical, condemning, self-righteous attitude, that is evil. The judgmental spirit has moved beyond making judgments in humility, and is doing so in prideful arrogance. It's a taking of authority that belongs only to God.

1 Cor. 4:3 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. 4 For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. 5 Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.

Even in the case of church discipline, we are doing so in a position of humility and love, desiring them to come back to God, not casting them away, and not making any final declaration upon their eternal state. Only God has that authority.

Maybe after hearing all that we are thinking, well I don't judge people like, that's not talking about me. I'm not actually condemning anyone to hell. Well I think what Jesus wants us to know here is that it is far more subtle than any of us would like to believe. Just as Jesus equates murder with anger, and adultery with lust, by driving at the heart, exposing us, laying us naked, so He is doing it here.

If we are honest with ourselves, we are incredibly judgmental people. It's the subtle or not so subtle thought that you are better than someone else. When you look at the Hitlers and the Stalin's of the world, and the shooter down in Florida, and you say, I would never do that. They are worse than I am. What's happening deep beneath the surface is that you are rising up above that person.

And it comes much closer to home for us. We are a talking people. We love talking, and we especially love talking about others. Judgmentalism is the ever so subtle delight that we find creeping into our hearts when we share news or hear news about another person. It doesn't have to be sin related, it could be about someone losing their job, a habit, personality, or circumstance, condition of their marriage. When it has its way we become full blown fault-finders, and we are harsh with one another, and are seeking to bring others down. We lack grace and we lack patience. It's feeling this sense of superiority and gladness in these moments that Jesus is forbidding. (Why do we not weep!) How do you know? Time/concern working on yourself, evidence of grace in others, praying for others.

And what happens when we do? the 2nd half of the verse happens. We are judged by God. The measure we use on others will be the measure God uses on us. This is not meaning, as some imagine, horizontal relationship with others. Sort of, be a friend and have a friend. If you are nice to others they will be nice to you. The context is clearly vertical, referring to the judgement of God. Judged for being judges. Judged for our critical heart. And sentenced to eternal punishment for it.

He's saying, if you want to rise up and condemn people, then you got the standard, and since you are so righteous so as to be the judge, that will be the measure I will use on you.

Romans 2:1 Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things.

When we are condemning others in our hearts (that is, we are not making right judgments in humility, but doing so with pride and self-righteousness), we in fact are condemning ourselves. Live before God.

Why are we condemning ourselves? It evidences that we do not have the gospel in our hearts.

2. The judgmental are blind to themselves

3 Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? 4 Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? 5 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.

So for Jesus to illustrate, He goes for optometry. Eye doctor. It's cartoonlike, with piercing sarcasm to expose our great hypocrisy. Jesus wants the cancer that is in us to be exposed. So you're laying on the operating table, wincing with your eye shut, couple nurses around you getting stuff ready. And then in barges the doctor. And the doctor's got this beam, 8 ft. beam sticking out of his eye. He's banging this thing all around, knocking all the medical trays over. He finally takes his seat next to you and says, okay, I'm ready to operate. A blind eye doctor with a beam trying to get a splinter out of another. It's a ridiculous situation. Are you kidding? It's laughable.

So what's the point. The big beam that is sticking out of your eye is your self-righteous, judgmental spirit. And here you are trying to deal with someone else's sin. You can't do it. It reveals that this is all a show. It's all pretense.

The hypocrisy is not in seeing the sin in your brother, it's in seeing their sin, and applying a more strict judgment to them than to your own sin. Condemn them for the speck, when you got a stinkin log sticking out of your eye. Whose got the problem!

"We pretend to have this great interest; we pretend that we are very distressed at finding this blemish. But in reality, as our Lord has already shown us (and this is the horrible part), we are really glad to discover it. It is hypocrisy." - Jones

So what do we do with our gross hearts... we cover it up. We give it a new godly wardrobe. We call it things like ministry, sharing a prayer request, seeking advice on something, or we say we just need to vent. But beneath the surface lurks the judgmental, self-righteous monster. (illustration?)

Lloyd Jones goes on to say, "Our real desire is to condemn the person, rather than to get rid of the evil that is in the person." -Jones. We're hypocrites.

The question I want us to answer is, why? What's going on beneath the surface that would cause us to be critical, to condemn, to rejoice in others failures. At the root of our desire to judge others is our desire to justify the self. We can't stand our own inadequacies. Their sin reminds us of our sin. It's like a mirror. We know we aren't different from them. In fact, you are most likely to see the things in others that you most hate in yourself.

This way, as John Stott says, when we judge "we experience the pleasure of self-righteousness without the pain of penitence." It's much easier to condemn than it is to repent.

Luke 18 is a perfect example of what Jesus is rebuking here.

18:9 He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: 10 "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' 13 But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but

beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

What is happening in our hearts when we judge others in this way, we are seeking righteousness. We are seeking justification. And since we can't do it according to God's standards, we are going to create our own standards. And to do that, we don't rise up to meet those standards, we put other people down.

This is the classic example of making fun of others so that you will feel better about yourself. This behavior does not stop in the 3rd grade. We're just more civilized in it.

"If when we judged others, our real motive was to destroy evil, we should look for evil where it is certain to be found, and that is in our own hearts. But if we are on the look-out for evil in others, our real motive is obviously to justify ourselves, for we are seeking to escape punishment for our own sins by passing judgement on others, and are assuming by implication that the Word of God applies to ourselves in one way, and to others in another." - Bonhoeffer.

This drives at our hypocrisy. We are generous to ourselves- rose colored glasses, and harsh with others. But this type of behavior cannot justify us. It only makes us more guilty. We are delusional to think that on day we will not appear before God's throne and receive judgement.

3. The judgmental are blind to the gospel

5 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.

Though Jesus is rebuking self-righteousness, He is still for helping others in their sin. The christian life is not me and Jesus, its we and Jesus. Salvation is for individuals, but for individuals that make up a community. What makes community messy is that sinful people are there. And we are called to love one another, brought into the process of sanctifying one another. As much as the secular culture doesn't want us minding anyone else's business, love demands that mind others. It's not loving to not care about someone's sin.

But the problem is, we can't care well with this big ole beam sticking out of our eyes. We are blind and incapable. So we got to take the log out of your own eye he says.

To take the log out we first have to become aware that we have a log. We have to become unblind to the fact that we are blind. We have to see the great big log of self-righteousness that is in us. We don't notice it, that's the problem. But you don't see the depths of your sin by staring at yourself. You see your sin by staring at God. Like Isaiah who once when he got a glimpse of God says woe is me, a man unclean. We have to see ourselves as utterly sinful, and until we do we are no help to the body of Christ.

Bonhoeffer comments on this, *"If my sinfulness appears to me to be in any way smaller or less detestable in comparison with the sins of others, I am still not recognizing my sinfulness at all. My sin is of necessity the worst, the most grievous, the most reprehensible. Brotherly love will find a number of extenuations for the sins of others; only for my sin is there no apology whatsoever. Therefore my sin is the worst. He who would serve his brother in the fellowship must sink all the way down to these depths of humility. How can I possibly serve another person in unfeigned humility if I seriously regard his sinfulness as worse than my own? Would I not be putting myself above him; could I have any hope for him? Such service would be hypocritical, and he quotes Thomas Kempis, "Never think that you have made any progress till you look upon yourself as inferior to all."*

The log does not come completely out until we not only see the log (see how sinful we are), but see the Savior and receive the righteousness of Christ. The sinner knows he has no hope of saving himself, no ability to remove the log. And though we can't hope in ourselves, there is One in whom we can hope. Jesus. Salvation can only be received as a gift. We have to stop pretending to be the doctor and lay ourselves as the patient, on the table bleeding to death, desperate to be operated on by Jesus in the gospel.

What we see in the gospel is that we not only judge our brothers and sisters who are sinners, but we are the ones who judged Christ, the innocent One, with no speck.

When it comes to Christ, we have in fact the greatest of sin, we have not just sat in judgement over our brother and sister, we have sat in judgement over Jesus. The same spirit that was in Herod and Pilate and in the soldiers as the whipped and flogged Jesus, and the same spirit in the crowd that begged for more. That was us. There, we were dead wrong. He was innocent, and yet we judged him, condemned him. The sinner standing in judgment over the righteous.

And in the gospel, we see a mighty reversal of justice. We don't get condemned. As we sit there judging Christ, Christ is taking our place for such wickedness. Christ is dying for us while we are killing Him. He pays the penalty for all those who are judgmental and self-righteous. The penalty for our sin is paid in full, and full of divine love. Justice is satisfied. And as a gift in His resurrection He gives us His righteousness.

We have been saved by grace by faith alone in Christ. Now, having died and risen with Christ, we are ready to serve our brother. Our eyes can see clearly. And what do we serve him with, the gospel, the Word of God. We don't believe the Scriptures teach any other technique to remove sin. We have one instrument, the gospel. Beholding the glory of the Lord we are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. Our ministry to one another is helping them behold the glory of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ. That is love.

The real reason why we are judged if we are judgmental, is that we do not have the righteousness of Christ.

But serving others with the gospel does have its limits. Jesus gives us a balancing statement.

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

This text almost feels like it comes out of nowhere, but its reminding us to not be indiscriminating in how we share the gospel with others. Serve others with the gospel, but there are limits.

These were not domesticated dogs... Don't think clifford. These are wild dogs, scavengers. The type of dogs that roam the streets, that would lick people's wounds. They eat garbage, throw up, and eat their own throw up. Sacrificial meet that was not burned was to be given to priests and their families. If an animal was killed by a wild predator, that meet could not be used for sacrifice, but had to be thrown out to the dogs (scavengers).

And the pigs were also not domesticated... don't think Peppa the pig. These were wild boars. Both dogs and pigs represent evil, wicked people. If you thought Jesus was a softy, he's calling people dogs and pigs here. There aren't more derogatory names for him to use.

2 Peter 2:22 What the true proverb says has happened to them: “The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire.”

What is holy and the pearls also represent the same thing, the word of God, the gospel of Jesus Christ. Dogs and pigs have something in common... they can't tell the value of a thing. And so they treat the gospel with mockery.

“The gospel of the kingdom is too glorious to be dragged through the mud. Reverence for the Christian message demands that it be protected from those who will not merely reject it but also repudiate it.”- Quarles

We are not going to sit by as people spit on the gospel.

Our normal christian duty is to be patient and persevere with others, but there are times we must move on.

Matthew 10:12 As you enter the house, greet it. 13 And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it, but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. 14 And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town.

Paul in Acts is preaching to the Jews, but says that when they are so hard, he says, your blood be on your hands, I'm going to the Gentiles.

What's not happening is we stop proclaiming the gospel, we just turn to others. There's more fruitful fields for us to invest in with our time and resources. This is the exception to the norm. The norm is that God has been incredibly patient with us, and so we persevere with others to win them to Christ.

Making judgments and being judgmental are vastly different. We are encouraged to the former, and forbidden for the latter. We as Harvest church have been entrusted with the gospel. This is the good news for every soul. Far be it from us to rise up in judgment against a brother or sister that has sinned. We are a community gathered around the Lamb slain for the sins of the world. Let us be the most humble servants of others. May our hearts break as we see sin in our neighbor, and may we be driven by the gospel, to proclaim the gospel to our brothers and sisters. This is our only hope. And even in this ministry we will fail, but we do not take our eyes off the hero, our sinless Savior who died for all who would receive Him.