

Judge Not!
Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC
Dr. H. Powell Dew, Jr.
August 8, 2021

Text: Matthew 7:1-6

Purpose: Jesus admonishes us, “Judge not.” But we do need to exercise wise discernment as we interact with others in life. That discernment is especially important in the church to root out sin and to test for false prophets that may come into the church. The mercy and grace we have received from God are like priceless pearls and costly diamonds. We need to handle them carefully and not cast them carelessly to an unbelieving world to be ripped and torn apart.

We come today to a passage of scripture I believe almost each person here is familiar with. “Judge not, that you be not judged.” All of us are in the habit of judging the things we see around us. Some gathered here may even have an Olympic Gold Medal in judging others. What they wear, what they say, how they walk, how they talk, where they work, the kind of car they drive, the school they went to, the neighborhood they live in, the friends they associate with, the family they came from – the list is endless! Judging others is so easy to participate in.



I don't know if you have seen the video clip that circulated several years ago on Facebook, but it depicts different situations and how you cannot judge what is happening simply by one observation.

The first video clip is situated on an airplane. It is night and a woman sitting on the window seat is in desperate need to go to the bathroom. She sees the bathroom door open and tries carefully to scoot by her seatmates without waking them up. Just as she is about to reach the aisle, the plane hits some turbulence and the lights come on in the cabin. When this happens the rest of the passengers wake up and find she has awkwardly fallen in the lap of an unsuspecting man. Things are not always what they seem.



The second clip on that video sees a dad out riding with his daughter and friends late one night. The girls want to get out and get something from the store. Just after they get out the dad calls out to his daughter and is handing her some money through the passenger side window. At that very moment, a police car comes up behind them seeing an old man handing a young girl money through the car window. Things are not always the way they seem.



The last clip in the video we find a man sitting on a park bench eating his lunch with his dog sitting faithfully beside him. The man takes out his brownie dessert and gets ready to eat it. Suddenly the dog sees something across the park and



lurches forward and snatches the man forward and knocks the brownie out of the man's hand. Once the man pulls himself together, he reaches down, blows the brownie off and begins to eat it. Several people in the park only saw the part when the man reached down and picked up something dark brown off the ground and began to eat it. You can imagine what they thought. But things are not always as they appear.

“Judge Not” vs. “Fruit Inspection”

When Jesus tells us to “Judge not, that you be not judged,” I believe He is telling us one of the key characteristics of a citizen of the kingdom of God. To judge means to decide, to distinguish, to condemn, or to avenge. The Greek word *Krino* means “to assume the office of a judge.” These verses do not mean we are forbidden to judge others, but it does mean we have not been appointed as judge of others and are not to judge their inward motives in the sense of condemning them.

We do not know why a person does what they do. We do not know all of the motives or situation in which people find themselves in.

- We do not know if that homeless person begging money on the side of the road is a professional beggar who refuses to work or someone that just lost their home in a fire last week. Who are we to judge? – But we do.
- We do not know if that teenager that broke into your car last week was a part of a gang that makes its livelihood



by stealing day in and day out or if his parents were home passed out drunk and there was no food in the house and the only thing, he could think of was to break into a car and steal the change in your cup holder so he could get some food. Who are we to judge? – But we do.

- You do not know if that person sleeping on the park bench is strung out on drugs or sleeping there to hide from an abusive boyfriend and has nowhere else to stay. Who are we to judge? – But we do.



When it comes to God judging me, I want Him to be as generous and forgiving as possible. Jesus reminds us in verse one that the measuring stick we use to judge others will be the same measuring stick that God will use on us. If we have been critical of misspoken words, God will judge our misspoken words with the same level of judgment. If we have been quick to get angry at the slightest injustice, then God will quickly judge our injustices.

If we are impatient with others because they drive slow, or are slow in the checkout line at Wal-Mart, or are blocking the aisle in the grocery store taking too long to make a decision, then we need to examine our hearts!



- One day you may be the one needing to drive slowly because you cannot see very well.

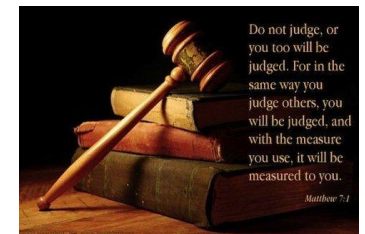
- Maybe one day you will have arthritis and cannot move to quickly in the checkout line.
- Maybe one day you will have to take time to read all the labels on cans in the store because your family needs to eat a gluten free diet and those items are difficult to find on the store shelves.

We need to get out of our own selfish world and see others through the eyes of Jesus – through the eyes of compassion and forgiveness.

The story is told of a father who attended church with his little boy. The father found fault with everything in the service. As they walked home, the man criticized the minister, the sermon, the choir and everything in general. The boy who had noticed what his father put in the offering plate said, “Well Dad, what can you expect for a quarter?”



Jesus is giving us, the citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven, a warning about our tendency to be self-righteous. That is why Jesus cautions us about making judgments. “*Judge not, that you be not judged.*” This thought goes hand in hand with what was found in chapter five with loving our enemies (5:44). If we love our enemies, we will extend mercy and forgiveness to others because we have been the recipient of such great mercy and forgiveness.



Romans 2:1 echoes this thought. *“Therefore, you are inexcusable, O Man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same thing.”*

But there are times we are called to exercise discernment about the actions of others. Yes, we are called to not set ourselves up as judge and jury over others, but we can make observations and draw appropriate conclusions if necessary.

Paul in several passages of scripture not only expected but insisted Christians pass judgment or discernment on fellow Christians. In the Book of Revelation, in chapters two and three, several churches were praised for their discernment and judgement, while others were judged for their failure to judge sin.



- In I Corinthians 5:1-5, Paul found in the Corinth church a man and his step mother cohabitating together. Paul brought it out in the open as a sin that needed to be dealt with in that church.
- In Matthew 18:15-17, a situation is described where one person has wronged another. The process by which the situation can be resolved peaceably is given. First you go to the person who offended you. If that doesn't resolve it, two or three believers are brought into the situation. If that doesn't resolve it, then that person is to be treated as a heathen or tax collector and essentially removed from the fellowship.

- In Matthew 7:15-20, we are told to be careful and guard against false prophets that may seek to come into the church. Jesus said you will know them by their fruits. We are admonished not to judge others in verse one, but in verse fifteen, it would seem as if Jesus is calling us to be fruit inspectors.



We need to find a balance between the extremes of “Judging” and “Fruit Inspecting.” We realize as we treat others harshly, often we are recipients of a harsh word. As we treat others kindly, often we are the recipients of the same kindness. Proverbs says, *“A soft answer turns away wrath.”* We need to embrace the truth that God has dealt with us with far more grace and mercy than we deserve. Likewise, we need to deal with others we encounter with mercy and grace, even if they don't deserve it.



On the other end of the spectrum, the world would call us to accept and embrace all sin under the umbrella of forgiveness and tolerance. To embrace that would actually appear to be accepting of their sin and would actually come across as condoning the sin they are doing. We are called in the midst of not judging others to observe sin as sin and call it what it is. As someone has once said, *“We are to love the sinner, but hate the sin.”*

We can still be faithful to our ideals if we reach out to individuals that are in lifestyles contrary to God's word with compassion and understanding. We do not have to

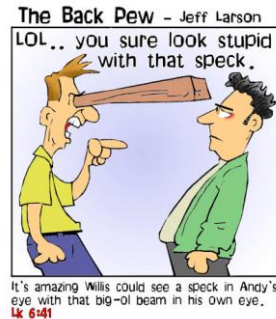
embrace their sin. Many have confused the two. Many Christian communities have embraced the sinner as well as the sin and received both as acceptable and condone those activities. If the Apostle Paul were here today, he would have some strong words for many churches and denominations.

If we worry about our own actions, our own words, our own deeds, and bring them under proper judgment with God's word, we will have a full-time job! Our judgments should be reserved for ourselves and compassion extended towards others as they work through their own shortcomings.

Hypocrisy!

One of the words that often rears its ugly head is the word "hypocrisy." Of all the ills that I hear from individuals outside the church it is this. I can hear them right now: "Oh yes, I know who is associated with your church. They said this to me one time. They did this to me another time. I am just as good (bad) as they are." The outside world is looking at us and judging our Jesus by what we say and what we do.

Hypocrisy is of great concern for Jesus. In verses 3-5 He said, "*And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove*



the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

I was speaking with someone I know very well a few weeks ago. He was criticizing his wife about something she had said. I reminded him of this verse about the log that may be in his eye and should not be criticizing his wife about that speck in hers. He told me, "I just cleaned my glasses. I can see just fine." He didn't get it!

Ruth E. Knowlton tells this on herself:¹ "Years ago I lived in an apartment building in a large city. The building next door was only a few feet away from mine, and I could look across the alley into the apartment on the same floor as mine. There was a woman who lived there, who I had never met, yet I could see her as she sat by her window each afternoon, sewing or reading."



"After several months had gone by, I began to notice her windows were dirty. Everything was indistinct through her smudged windows. I would say to myself, 'I wonder why that woman doesn't wash her windows? They look dreadful!'"

"One bright morning I decided to do my spring housecleaning and thoroughly clean my apartment, including washing the windows on the inside."

¹ A Treasury of Bible Illustrations (page 222, number 563 – A New Window on the World)

“Late in the afternoon when I was finished, I sat down by the window with a cup of coffee for a rest. What a surprise! Across the way the woman sitting by her window was clearly visible. Her windows were clean!”

“Then it dawned on me. I have been criticizing her dirty windows but all the time I was observing them through my own dirty ones!”

Just as this woman failed to examine her own windows first before judging her neighbor, we too need to examine our own self first to make sure we are not just as guilty as the one we seek to judge.

Be careful and cautious about how you criticize. One day, a man who had a good opinion of himself and his own virtues and thought he was so much better than anyone else, stopped in front of a taxidermist’s window, in which there was an owl which attracted quite a crowd of sightseers.



He was so sure he had far superior knowledge of birds, he said, “Well, if I couldn’t stuff an owl better than that, I would quit the business. The head is not right; the pose of the body is awkward; the feathers are not right; and the feet are not under it right.” Just then the owl turned its head and gave him a quick wink or two. The crowd roared. The man slipped away as fast as he could go.²

Jesus gives us the prescription for such situations. First take the plank out of our own eye, and then we can help

others with their specks. I would go so far as to say once we have the plank out of our eye, we still need to be careful judging others. After all, if there was once a plank in our eye, there had to be some splinters left behind! Carefully extend help to others with compassion and not judgment.

Casting Pearls before Swine

Maybe that is why Jesus gave us the next verse for us to consider. *“Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.”* It takes a very wise person to know when and how to approach another person to discuss the speck in their eye. If you approach a person with the wrong spirit, at the wrong time, with the wrong wording, with an improper motive, you can actually do more harm than good.



A young man served as a deputy in the county and was a well a respected deacon in the nearby church. One night he had to take several men to jail because they had been drinking way too much. On the way to the jail, they were making fun of the deacon and his church. Once they were safely behind bars, one of them hollered out at the deputy and asked him to preach them a sermon. They all chimed in and said, “Yea, preach us a sermon deacon.” The officer declined their request because he could tell it would simply be like casting his pearls before the swine.

If you have ever had the privilege of “slopping the hogs” like I did years ago on my grandfather’s farm, you would

² A Treasury of Bible Illustrations (page 103 number 273)

never think about putting anything sacred or holy in the hog pen. It would be trampled and ruined.

Every evening when I get home, I am greeted at the door by three dogs that are looking for their night time snack. They are begging and crying out for their nightly hot dog. If I were to take diamonds and pearls and place it on the plate along with their nightly treat, they would eat them and not think a thing about it.

You and I have been given a great gift from God. We have received forgiveness, grace and mercy from God. We do not need to treat it lightly nor do we need to parade it before those that are not receptive to hear or receive the word of God. We do not need to cast our pearls before pigs, or give the things that are holy to the dogs.

God has given a special gift of discernment to the people of God in His church. In I Corinthians 12, we see the gift of discernment listed along with wisdom,



knowledge, faith, healing, prophecy, and tongues. The gift of discernment helps a person to be able to see through other people's phoniness. It allows us to discern when the Spirit of God is resting upon another person and when it is not. It allows us to listen to God and determine if the preaching or teaching coming from another person is actually from God or not. This is a gift to the church.

Failure to listen to that still small voice in some situations in life will result in the pigs and dogs of this world to "*turn and tear you to pieces.*" Be careful as you interact with the

world. They do not appreciate the Holy things of God; they love to mock the faith and faithfulness of believers.

As citizens of the Kingdom of God, we are to be as wise as serpents as we go through this life, but we are to be as innocent as doves. You cannot silence all the criticisms of others at home, at work, at church, or elsewhere.



Sometimes we are benefitted by the helpful advice of others. Sometimes it may come across as criticism. Yet these words can help us grow stronger and sharpen us as workers in the hand of God. But we need to guard ourselves from counterproductive criticism – be careful giving it and be careful receiving it. Often one word can cause me to withdraw. We need to guard against harsh and petty faultfinding because it can be like a corrosive chemical that has the potential of harming all of the relationships around us.

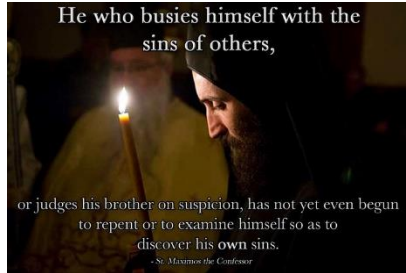
Many ministers of the gospel through the years have received harsh criticism. I read of a story about an evangelist was handed a note by an usher just prior to getting up to deliver his sermon. When he opened it up, it only said, "FOOL." When the evangelist stood up, he mentioned to the crowd that he had received many letters of criticism through the years. Not once had the person signed their name. Tonight, he got a note that simply said "FOOL" on it. He said, "This person forgot to write their name and signed their name instead!"

When we harbor a critical judging spirit, we are actually playing the part of a fool. Jesus said, the judgment you

place upon others will be the same judgment which will be measured out upon you!

The Mercy of God

We come to the conclusion of our service. Maybe you have had the opportunity to hold the mirror up to your life and see that you have been guilty of judging others with harsh criticism. I want to invite you to pray and ask God to help you examine your heart and repent of your sins.



I am also going to ask others that may have never publicly confessed Christ as their Savior if they feel led to do that today. I invite you to come and pray with me, ask God to forgive them of your sins, and follow that decision by baptism.

I am going to ask those that have been attending but have never made this church their church home to come forward if they would like to make this church their church home. Those that have already been baptized by immersion, we will gladly receive them by way of transfer of letter.

Maybe you simply need to come and pray about a burden that is on your heart today. It could be a broken relationship, a physical need for yourself, or a physical need for a friend. If you would like me to pray with you, I will be at the front of the church.

LET US PRAY