

Matthew 7:1-6 • Judging

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Our passage today is both deeply challenging and profoundly liberating. We will examine Jesus's words, which have often stirred up controversy and great misunderstanding. This teaching of Jesus has been wildly misapplied. Let's jump right into it!

Passage

Matthew 7:1-6, "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. 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. 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."

Introduction

Now, let's be honest. These words of Jesus can be a bit...unsettling, can't they? Especially that first line: "Judge not." It's a phrase we've all heard, perhaps even wielded ourselves, often in defense against unwanted criticism. But if we are truly honest with ourselves, many of us would have to admit that we enjoy judging others. I have to admit, it's fun to judge. I feel better about myself when I see others as worse than I am. Somehow, I feel more comfortable with myself when I criticize others. It gives a false sense of superiority, a fleeting moment of feeling "better than." I know it's terrible!

Why do we act critically towards others who disagree with us or have a conflict with us? Why is it so tempting to point fingers, find fault, and elevate ourselves by diminishing others? I think it is because vanquishing a demon is easier than resolving a conflict with a brother. We demonize others so that disagreeing with them will feel more appropriate. It's easier to dismiss someone as "wrong," "foolish," or even "evil" than to engage with their perspective and to seek understanding. It is easier to burn bridges than build them, and we like to watch things burn sadly.

A Problem for the Church

Unfortunately, this tendency toward judgment is not absent from the church. In fact, it can be a significant problem among followers of Christ. We, who are called to be known by our love, sometimes judge one another harshly and treat each other unfairly. We draw lines, create factions, and engage in spiritual one-upmanship, all while claiming to follow the one who embodies both compassion and conviction.

Think about the last few years and the recent COVID-19 pandemic. A little mask made us go mad. Those who wore them and those who didn't were judged. Sadly, this became a test of Christian faithfulness in some circles. What a terrible witness. But, friends, this is not the way of Jesus. He calls us to something higher, something more profound. He challenges us to make moral judgments about others, but in a way that is helpful and not harmful. To do this, we must be introspective. We must first look inward before we look outward.

Big Idea: Look in, then out. It's a simple phrase, but it holds the key to understanding Jesus' teaching on judgment. I chose the word "look" as opposed to "judge" because the Greek word here translated

as “judge” has a wide range of meanings, like “examine” and “inspect,” many of which are not negative. The way we use the word “judge” now is primarily negative. “Looking” or “examining” the lives of others is not inappropriate, but it must be done correctly. Introspection must happen first, “looking in.”

Misunderstanding of Verses 1 and 2

Now, before we delve deeper, let’s address a common misunderstanding. Many people interpret verse 1, “Judge not, that you be not judged,” as a blanket prohibition against any form of discernment or evaluation. They argue that we should never express opinions about others’ behavior or beliefs, lest we be guilty of hypocrisy. But is that really what Jesus is saying? Is he advocating for a complete abandonment of critical thinking and moral reasoning? Absolutely not! Later in the Sermon on the Mount and other passages in the bible, we are called to “look” at others. Consider verse 6, where we are called to identify “pigs” and “dogs” – those who would desecrate what is holy. Think about verses 15-20, where we are told that we will recognize false prophets by their fruits. Or Matthew 18:15-17, where Jesus teaches us how to confront fellow believers in sin. And let’s not forget John 7:24, where Jesus himself tells a crowd to judge him in a righteous way. Clearly, Jesus is not advocating for a naive and indiscriminate approval of everything and everyone. He is not telling us to abandon our ability to discern truth from falsehood, right from wrong, or good from evil. So, what does he mean when he says, “Judge not”?

Looking In, then Out in Verses 3-5

To understand this, we need to turn our attention to verses 3-5, where Jesus presents a powerful and unforgettable image: the speck and the log. Matthew 7:3-5, 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.” The setting of this illustration is the Church, within the context of the community of faith. This is a family carpentry shop. Jesus use of the term “brother” indicates the conflict is between his followers. The usage of “brother” in Matthew 18, where one follower sees the sin of another, refers to a fellow follower of Christ. The word “brother” is frequently used in Matthew’s gospel to refer to a fellow believer. This marks the first time in the Sermon on the Mount that “hypocrite” is applied to a follower of Christ, “brother,” and not to an outsider, the Pharisees.

Imagine the scene: a group of carpenters working together in a shop. One carpenter notices a tiny speck of sawdust in his brother’s eye. Concerned, he offers to help remove it. But here’s the catch: this well-intentioned carpenter has a massive log sticking out of his own eye, impairing his vision and hindering his ability to help. The “speck” is likely a piece of sawdust. The “log” could be as large as a battering ram or the main beam of a roof or floor. The absurdity of this image is impossible to miss. It highlights the hypocrisy and self-deception that often underlie our judgments of others. We are so quick to notice the minor flaws in others, while remaining blind to the glaring defects in ourselves.

The point is not that the one judging is a worse sinner than the one they are judging, but rather that they easily see minor issues in others more easily than they see significant issues in themselves. Those with an unclear view of themselves often have a distorted view of others. We need to identify the speck and remove it, but only after we have looked inside. Taking out a foreign object from someone’s eye is a delicate process and could hardly be managed by a surgeon with a beam in his eye. He would most likely cause harm to his patient. On the other hand, the one who has successfully

removed a log from his own eye would be well-equipped to take out a small object from another's eye. Looking inside helps us help our brother.

But what does this “log” represent? It represents our own sins, weaknesses, and imperfections. It represents the areas in our lives where we fall short of God's standards and fail to live up to our own ideals. It represents the pride, anger, bitterness, and selfishness that can cloud our judgment and distort our perception of others. Before we can effectively help others with their “specks,” we must first confront our own “logs.” We must engage in honest self-examination, acknowledging our own flaws and seeking God's forgiveness and healing.

This process of “looking in” is not always easy or pleasant. It requires humility, vulnerability, and a willingness to confront the uncomfortable truths about ourselves. But it is essential if we want to offer help and not harm. When we take the time to examine our own hearts, we begin to develop empathy for others. We realize that we are all flawed human beings, struggling with our own weaknesses and imperfections. This understanding can soften our judgments and make us more compassionate and forgiving.

Looking Out and Not In

But what happens when we “look out” without first “looking in”? What are the consequences of hypocritical judgment? Hypocritical judgment will lead to harsh judgment from others and God. First, we risk alienating and hurting those we are judging. Our criticism, no matter how well-intentioned, can be perceived as judgmental, condescending, and unloving. It can damage relationships and create division within the community of faith. Second, we open ourselves up to the same judgment we are handing out to others. As Jesus says in verse 2, “For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.” Matthew 6:14-15, which speaks to being unforgiven by God because we don't forgive others, leads me to believe that the passive verb “judge” has God as its subject. God will judge harshly when we harshly judge others. The Golden Rule in Matthew 7:12 will lead us to judge others as we would want to be judged. Since judgment in Jesus' mind is a step toward healing, we should say that we would seek to heal others as we would want to be healed.

The Balance of Discernment in Verse 6

Now, let's turn our attention to verse 6, which often causes confusion and debate: “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.” On the one hand, we are called to be loving and compassionate towards all people, regardless of their beliefs or behavior. On the other hand, we are warned against sharing sacred truths with those who would reject or abuse them. How do we reconcile these seemingly contradictory instructions? Wisdom is more about maintaining balance than falling to one side. Wisdom deals in “and's” more than “or's.” Jesus is balancing charity with discernment here. In 2 Peter 2:22, the terms “pigs” and “dogs” are used for false prophets and teachers. Pearls would look like small bits of corn, a standard part of a pig's diet. They would be enraged to find pearls in place of their food and attack. Wild dogs were likely to pester those who fed them. Common Jewish wisdom warned against feeding wild dogs, similar to how we know not to feed bears. One Rabbi instructed his students to feed a hungry dog and then drive it away with a stick. Wild dogs at this time were seen as menaces. They would bite the hand that fed them.

The point of this verse is that God's gift of truth should not be left open to abuse. Jesus taught his disciples to move on from places that adamantly rejected their message (Matthew 10:11-15). Paul followed this discretion as well on his missionary journey (Acts 13:46, 18:6, and 19:19). In other words,

discernment is essential. We must prayerfully consider who we are sharing with, how we are sharing, and what we are sharing. We must be wise stewards of the truth, using it to build up and encourage, rather than to tear down and condemn.

Conclusion

So, what does all of this mean for us today? It means that we are called to a higher standard of love, compassion, and discernment. We are called to “look in” before we “look out,” to confront our own flaws before we criticize others, and to offer grace and truth in equal measure. Our brothers and sisters in Christ need our help. We all have specks of sawdust in our eyes, and these specks should not be ignored. We need help to remove them. We must “look in” so we can help them out. Friends, this is not always easy. It requires a daily commitment to humility, self-reflection, and prayer. It requires a willingness to forgive others as we have been forgiven, and to extend grace as we have received grace.

Steps

If you are a follower of Christ, I want to encourage you to commit to reconciliation before taking communion. Have you hit someone with the beam that was sticking out of your own eye when you were trying to remove their speck? Seek reconciliation. Go to that person, confess your own failings, and ask for forgiveness.

If you are not yet following Jesus, I want to encourage you to be brave. Introspection is scary. You may not want to look inside because you are afraid of what you will see. Your Father has good intentions for you. It may hurt, but his goal is to heal you, not harm you. Unfortunately, some healing hurts. God loves you more than you can imagine, and he desires to heal you from the inside out.

Life Level Application

Head: Read Galatians 6:1-5. The sermon emphasizes “looking in” before “looking out” when addressing the faults of others. How does understanding this principle align with Paul’s instruction in Galatians 6:1 to restore with “gentleness” those who are caught in sin, and what does this reveal about the proper attitude for Christian accountability?

Heart: Read James 5:7-11. The sermon highlights the damage caused by judgmental attitudes, even within the church. Reflecting on James 5:9 and the admonition not to grumble against one another, how can we cultivate a spirit of patience and forbearance to avoid contributing to division and discord within the community of faith?

Hand: Read Romans 14:1-12. The sermon addresses the balance of discernment and charity in verse 6. Considering the principle of not passing judgment on matters of conscience in Romans 14:10, what practical boundaries can you establish in your relationships to avoid imposing your personal convictions on others, and how can you create space for respectful dialogue and understanding?

Habit: Based on the overall message of looking inward before judging outward, how can you develop a new pattern of pausing before offering criticism, asking God to reveal any “logs” in your own eye, and seeking to understand the other person’s perspective with compassion?

ANNOUNCEMENTS

First Steps Gathering | Sun. May 4 | After 9AM & 11AM Service | Fireside

Whether you are new to the area and looking for a church or exploring what it means to follow Jesus, this is a great place to start. Our First Steps Gathering happens on the 1st Sunday of each month. In 20 minutes, we would like to give you an overview of what it looks like to make Sonrise your church.

Cultivating Christ-Centered Relationships | Fri. May 9 | 6:30-8:30 PM

All women are invited for an evening of connection and growth, exploring the beautiful and sometimes challenging landscape of relationships. Learn practical ways to foster deeper, more meaningful connections. Dessert provided. *\$5 suggested donation to cover costs.* More details and sign-up available on Church Center.

Men's Breakfast | Sat. May 10 | 8-9:30AM | Dining Hall

Join our monthly gathering for men of all ages to get together around tables for a meal and meaningful conversation.

Night of Worship | Sun. May 18 | 6:30-8:00 PM | Auditorium

Join us for a night of worship, reflection, and response as we seek God's work to break the strongholds of sin in our lives. Through prayer and truth, we will tear down the lies that keep us bound and step into the freedom Christ offers. Come ready to encounter His presence and embrace His victory. Let this be the night of your breakthrough!

Family Campout | Aug. 7-10 | Mt. Hood Village RV Resort

Join us for the Sonrise Family Campout this year at Mt. Hood Village at the base of Mt. Hood. Bring your family, dog, and neighbor for some mountain fun! Registration will close on July 16th. Nonrefundable after July 31st. For more info, please contact Emily Kukis at 503. 309.3534 or email at coreyandemilykukis@gmail.com. Additional details can be found on Church Center.

Songs from this morning:

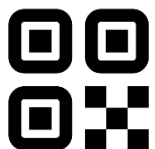
House of the Lord - Jonathan Smith & Phil Wickham

O Praise the Name - Hillsong Worship

Oh Lord You're Beautiful - Keith Green

Broken Vessels (Amazing Grace) - Hillsong Worship

Living Hope - Brian Johnson & Phil Wickham



For more info or to
register, visit isonrise.com
or explore events/groups
on the Church Center App.

