

The Wisdom of Jesus
Be Careful of a Judgmental Spirit
Matthew 7:1-6

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We have been studying the Sermon on the Mount. More than a few of you have indicated that the subject matter of the last few weeks has been extremely convicting. Not surprising. We come to a section of Jesus' sermon this morning that, to use a phrase that has been often used, "Will step on our toes."

Text: ¹ "Judge not, that you be not judged. ² For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. ³ And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? ⁴ 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? ⁵ Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. ⁶ "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.

Because of the potential for making this passage mean something that Jesus never meant, we are going to undergo our study in a little bit different way this morning.

The Context of this Passage

The Sermon on the Mount is directed toward His disciples in a way that contrasts true discipleship with hypocritical discipleship. This contrasting begins with the Beatitudes and continues throughout the entire sermon. We might highlight verse 5:20. Jesus has contrasted core beliefs (chapter 5) and devotional practices (chapter 6). The teaching has been "Be authentic when you practice good deeds of giving and praying and seek as your priority the Kingdom of God." The continuing context sets up **authentic discipleship with hypocritical discipleship**. If we don't understand this, we are in danger of misunderstanding the entire teaching.

It is not the action of Godly judging or discernment of right and wrong that is being condemned, but rather the attitude of our judging.

The Caution of Misunderstanding this Passage

Some have used this passage to teach that we just keep our mouths shut. If someone is grossly living a life of sin, we just say "Not my place to judge." It may not be our place to judge; only God reserves that right, but neither is this passage saying that we take a laissez-faire attitude and accept sin, rationalize sin, and never confront sin. *We cannot use this passage as our excuse to excuse sin.*

Evidence in this Passage:

1. The Context of the teaching in the Sermon on the Mount.
2. The clarification (verse 2) of the seeming outright command of verse 1.
3. The further clarification of verse 5

Evidence of the Bible:

1. Matthew 18:15-20.

¹⁵ “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶ But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that *‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’* ¹⁷ And if he refuses to hear them, tell *it* to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

2. 1 Corinthians 5:1-5

¹ It is actually reported *that there is* sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles—that a man has his father’s wife! ² And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you. ³ For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed. ⁴ In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁵ deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Again, the evidence is clear by these passages that there are times to call sin—sin! So, what does this mean in Matthew 7?

The Caution Sounded in this Passage

Be Careful of Judging:

1. Be careful when you judge—There are some things only reserved for God to judge. For example a person’s eternal standing before God. We don’t know all that God knows. We don’t know all the facts. The worse kind of knowledge is partial knowledge.
2. Be careful how you judge—The manner of our spirit is the key to this passage. Our lives should exhibit two things—Pure motives and Pure Lives. Only with pure motives and pure lives are we ready to confront someone in their sin.
3. Be careful who you judge—Verse 6 seems kind of distant at first and irrelevant. But actually, it is critical to understanding this passage. Some people can’t accept the truth of what we say and when we speak judgment, we drive them away instead of draw them to Christ.

A famous preacher by the name of F.B. Meyer said, “Be careful when we judge, for there are three things that you don’t know when you judge. First, you don’t know how hard that person tried not to sin. Second, you don’t know the forces assailed against them. Third, you don’t know what you would have done in similar circumstances.”

A Case Study for this passage:

Luke 18:9-14

⁹ Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: ¹⁰ “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’ ¹³ And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise *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, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

The NIV says in verse 9, “and looked down upon others.” We know that we have missed the mark in this area of judging when we “look down upon others.”

Dr. Katrina Firlik was the first woman admitted into the neurosurgery residency at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. Her recent book, *Another Day in the Frontal Lobe*, provides a glimpse into the training of a brain surgeon. In one chapter she shares a story from the last year of her residency—a time when she was already becoming jaded to the tragedies of neurological devastation:

I walked into yet another examining room ... a brand-new consult from out of town: 18-years-old, cerebral palsy, spasticity. Okay, okay, I've seen this before, I just need to get a good history before my attending (doctor) walks in. Efficiency is key. I looked at the patient for a second: very skinny, special wheelchair, arms contracted, head support in place, mouth hung open. It was clear I wasn't going to get the story from him, so I turned to the parents, my back toward the patient, and started to take down the history. ...

[When my mentor walked in], I cringed. ... He sat down on the examining table, the only seat left in the cramped room. After introducing himself, he surveyed the compact scene—the patient, and then focused his gaze back on the patient. After what seemed like several, almost uncomfortably quiet seconds, he looked the patient in the eye and asked, "So, when did you graduate from high school?" The young man's face lit up like I had no idea it could.

My mentor had noticed something I had missed. The patient was wearing a large high-school ring, so large that it looked a little silly on his bony finger. His body, far more than his mind, had borne the brunt of his cerebral palsy. He was a proud, beaming high-school graduate, who used a specialized computer to help him communicate. For the remainder of the visit I sat in the corner, duncelike, humbled by the enormity of this ring now staring me in the face.

We make snap judgments everyday. When we pre-judge another person and assume we know their story, choosing not to listen to their verbal and non-verbal communication, we make the saddest mistake of all. It's so easy to view people as a statistic and not as a person for whom Christ died. (Story Copied from PreachingToday.Com)

Hugh Poland, Kingwood, Texas; source: Katrina Firlik, Another Day in the Frontal Lobe (Random House, 2007), pp. 138-139

Many of us are wearing something today over our clothes. It's not visible, but it's there. It's a black judge's robe. I urge you as Jesus' disciples to let go of your gavel and throw off your robe. I urge to rest in confidence that God is a righteous judge.

And since God is a righteous judge, we need to be ready to face His judgment.