

## Summer on the Mount: Judgment Redefined- Matthew 7:1-6, 8/25/19

Everyone who meets my mom, Linda loves her. She is silly, gregarious, easy-going and a great conversationalist. And she doesn't take herself too seriously, she would be the first to admit that she isn't a details person, and can sometimes be a bit absent-minded, which has led to many what we affectionately call "Linda moments." One such moment- when she was babysitting my niece who was about 3 at the time, she was getting her ready for bed. Helping her brush her teeth, puts the toothpaste onto the toothbrush and starts to brush...And a funny face comes across my niece- "grandma, this is yucky..." Thinking Joelle was just being difficult or wasn't used to the tooth paste, she just kept going... until she looks over and notices not tooth paste, it was **butt paste** opened next to the sink. Now for those who have not had the pleasure- this is for diaper rash not cleaning teeth.

**[Title Slide]** When we are not paying attention, we can easily misuse something in a way it was never intended, thankfully in this example, it wasn't harmful. Many people misuse Scripture for what it was never intended to do. Today we are going to look at a verse in Scripture that is probably the single most misused verse in the Bible, often in harmful ways that are destructive and lead many people astray. This is probably the most often quoted verse by those that may not know any other verses in the Bible- but this one they have memorized. **Matthew 7:1 Do not judge.** Sometimes I hear this quoted by people who want to be left alone to do whatever they want to do, even if it is self-destructive. This verse is often used as the flagship motto of our inclusive, tolerance-based culture. Our culture uses this verse to say that no one should tell anyone else that their beliefs or values or morals are right or wrong. All values and religions and moral decisions are equally valid. Sometimes I hear this verse used in the church. Even though we see clearly that another brother or sister in Christ is walking in sin that is hurting themselves or others but we say, "Who am I to judge?" Is this what Jesus means when he says, "Do not judge?" We want to look at this statement of Jesus in context of the sermon on the mount and see **3 ways Jesus Redefines Judgment.**

### **What Judging is NOT, How we Judge WRONGLY, How we Judge RIGHTLY**

Matthew 7:1-5

***<sup>1</sup>"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. <sup>2</sup> For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. <sup>3</sup> "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?***

***<sup>4</sup> 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? <sup>5</sup> You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.***

### **What Judging Is NOT**

If what Jesus is saying in this passage is that no one should judge the rightness or wrongness of a belief system or morality, then we have a big problem with the Bible. We have a problem for example with Elijah the Prophet who spoke forcefully against King Ahab, the king of Israel and

the false prophets of Baal. We have a problem with Paul the Apostle Paul said we are to: “Rebuke the works of darkness” and did that often, which got him imprisoned. But even more of a problem would be that Jesus, throughout the entire sermon on the mount is making all kinds of judgments about what is morally right and wrong, what beliefs are true and false, and even what people have real faith vs. a fake religion. What do we make of Jesus who says, “Don’t judge” and then turns around and makes all kinds of judgments? In fact, one of the most eye-popping judgments is in the very next verse-v.6, “Don’t throw pearls to pigs.” In other words-don’t give something precious and valuable to someone who doesn’t know what to do with it or can’t handle it. Guess what? How do you determine who is “piglike” in the analogy unless you are able to make some judgments? Take it a step further, Jesus commands us to judge. **John 7:24 Judge not according to appearance but judge correctly.** So, there is a right and a wrong way of judging. We need to be very careful when we quote a Bible verse...we may think we are using toothpaste, but it might be butt paste.

**How we Judge WRONGLY:** What kind of judgment is he against? Three Kinds Heaven-like, Hypercritical and Hypocritical.

### 1) Heaven-like Judgment

The word translated “judge”- Krino, has a variety of meanings. It can mean to discern, make a decision, acting upon knowledge. But here in the context the vast majority of scholars agree that the kind of judgment Jesus is against is where one is **assuming the position of God as final judge**. God is the judge, the Bible is absolutely clear about that. God sees what is in the heart. His judgment from heaven will be absolutely just. In the end He will both unite and separate, create and destroy, reward and condemn. When we take on the heaven-like position of God-WE are judging motives that only God can see. WE declare people condemned, WE separate and exclude and write people off. We are playing God with a sense of finality. We are NEVER to write people off and say they are hopeless. How many of you ever had someone, including yourself, think you were hopeless?

### 2) Hypercritical Judgment

**v.3 Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye?**

Look at- “Gaze upon, fixated on...” Food in your teeth...don’t stare. See here the kind of judgment that Jesus has in mind is hypercritical judgment, a speck of sawdust. Let me give you some characteristics of hypocritical judgment.

**Destructively Critical.** It is the one who does not look to help someone grow from their faults, but to put them in their place. To marginalize and isolate. To make them feel badly about themselves, worthless and punished. You aren’t welcome. Sadly, this describes some of our childhood in your home. When you criticize or judge, are you trying to maintain the relationship and help or are you doing it to make them feel worthless? Before you think you need to criticize others, read 1 Corinthians 13 and then decide if what you want to do is an act of constructive love or destructive criticism.

**Delighting in fault-finding.** When we have to confront someone that ought to be an agonizing, painful experience because we don't want to hurt the person. But the hypercritical spirit of judgment finds delight in it. 1 Cor. 13 says love does not delight in evil and yet the hypercritical person seems to; getting a satisfaction in pointing out errors and is almost disappointed if it does not find them. Why? In order to justify themselves. To feel better about themselves and prove themselves to be on the good side. Remind you of the story Jesus told in Luke 18 of the pharisee and the tax collector who go up to the temple to pray. The pharisee says, God I thank you that I'm not like this sinner here... I pray, keep the law, I fast. Meanwhile the tax collector stood at a distance and beat his chest and couldn't even look at- asking for mercy on him as a sinner. Jesus said, that man is justified, not the hypercritical, self-justifying one.

Do we come to worship and say- God thank you that I'm not like these who don't put on a shirt and tie and where shorts and jeans to church? I dress up like I'm supposed to. Or God, I thank you that I'm not like those stuffy people who think they need to dress up and impress people and I can come as I am and be real. Or God, thank you that I'm not one of those people who raise their hands when they worship, trying to get your attention and others...God thank you that I'm not one of those stiff people who can't express themselves when they worship. Do you come into church looking to find fault and what is wrong? A missed note or word in a song, someone who didn't say hello, mic issue or a typo? Do you looking for something to disagree with? This is the hypercritical spirit of judgment Jesus is against.

**Assuming the worst.** 1 Cor. 13 says Love "hopes all things" but this judging spirit hopes for the worst. A hypercritical spirit habitually expresses their opinion without a knowledge of all the facts, without listening, without considering the circumstances and really trying to assume the best. We have no right to pronounce any judgment without being aware of these facts. Are you quick to jump to conclusions? Are you quick to think the worst of your husband or wife? Your child? A pastor or leader? The person on the other side of the aisle? Hypercriticism is a relationship killer. Ugly things can happen in a marriage with this attitude, in a church with this attitude, in a company and in a country.

### **3) Hypocritical Judgment**

<sup>3</sup> *"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?"* <sup>4</sup> *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?"* <sup>5</sup> *You hypocrite!*

The imagery is quite funny. Can you imagine a guy with a beam for a house, 40ft. long and 5 feet round attempt to say, "Look at that speck of sawdust in your eye, now hold still so I can get it!" Hypocritical judgment is blind to their own sin but can see everyone else's with 20/20 vision. They are self-deceived like that pharisee at the temple to worship who had a beam in his eye. That was me... I stood in judgment of Christians- I would call them hypocrites, saying they are faking it and pretend to be holy. I keep it real. Except that I would lie to my parents, lie to my girlfriend, and put on a show to others even though I knew I was a fraud. I was blind to the beam. Are there beams in your own eye that you need to deal with?

Now if we stop there, we miss the full teaching of Christ and we may think we have no responsibility to judge, to stand for truth, to correct, discipline and rebuke. We might be content burying our head in the sand, avoiding conflict, being passive to sin, or cowardice of all kinds. But listen to the rest of his teaching.

### **How we do Judge RIGHTLY**

*<sup>5</sup>first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.*

If you have something in your eye, it's pretty annoying isn't it? It takes away your ability to see clearly, it's amazing that one little eyelash, piece of sawdust, could throw off your entire day if not dealt with. Brother got a little metal file in eye...had to go to ER. This is a spiritual metaphor. When we have besetting sins lodged in our soul, it not only takes away our ability to see clearly. The sin of greed can make us workaholics and unable to see our family and priorities clearly, or to falsely think our security is in our possessions. Not only makes us not see clearly, but it eventually shipwreck our faith and our lives. **Hebrews 3:12 See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.** What causes people to fall away from faith? More often than not, it isn't intellectual issues, it is unchecked, habitual sin that hardens the heart and the head. I have seen unchecked sin of greed, lust, anger, lying ultimately lead to full-on unbelief. They start as a speck.

Jesus says, deal with the beam, and then "see clearly" to take out the speck. In contrast to the "gazing, judgmental star" used earlier, this word means "a clear vision." Jesus calls us to loving, speck removal with a restoring purpose here in this text. We need this. But we need it the way people get an eyelash out of an eye. VERY, VERY carefully. **John Chrysostom- Correct your brother, not as a foe, nor as an adversary, exacting penalty, but as a physician.** Winsome, careful, gentle. Very close and surgical...not with a chainsaw to the eye. I put him in his place. NO! NEVER! Is that how you would want to have someone remove the speck? The most loving thing to do is restorative speck removal.

Now how do we do that? How do we get the ability on one hand see clearly enough to accurately judge sin as sin and compassionate enough to be so tender, careful, surgically restorative? Do you have that balance? In your own strength, assume NO. Personalities are different- some say love, love...no truth...others truth, truth, no love. I'm a peacemaker, I couldn't bear to confront and cause conflict... I'm a truth-talker. No Spin. I tell it like it is. And we have a schizophrenic culture that isn't going to train us this way. Pulls in both directions away. One hand- Individualistic culture- can't tell anyone they are wrong or it is hate, can't discipline a child in school or it is abuse. On the other- internet culture- most scathing and flagrant things.

Jesus shows us the Only way to be a good physician- **First see the scale then see the beam.** What do I mean? Go back to verse 2.

*<sup>2</sup>For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.*

We might call this the boomerang effect. What goes around comes around. Those who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones. On the human level, there is a sense in which those who are God-like in their judgment of others open themselves up to being judged more harshly by others. Could it be one of the reasons why you aren't seeing mercy, kindness, healthy friendships, good work relationships, a loving marriage because you of a judging, critical spirit? But, I believe Jesus has God's "Measuring scales" of judgment in mind. The point is- The scales of God's judgment on the last day is to be in our sight. Jesus is telling us to remember before we pass judgment on someone else that we too will one day stand before the throne of God to give an account for our lives. Now there are essentially two scales upon which we will be judged. The scale of JUSTICE. The scale of GRACE. The scale of justice is very exacting, which weighs each and every sinful thought, word and action against God's holiness, with the just judgment given in return...any takers on that one? OR the scale of GRACE. Where the sinless, perfect, lamb of God- Jesus is weighed and measured in our place and we receive his just reward. Scripture says anyone who trusts Jesus and his work on the cross for us and not our own fatal attempt to achieve righteousness will be weighed on the scale of Grace. Praise God! So, what scale would you like God to weigh you? So, Jesus is saying- But which measure do you usually grab when you judge other people? Grace or Justice? " That guy just did 90 miles an hour and cut in front of me. Where's the cop when you need him?" When you're in a hurry, you don't seem to mind that you've got away with it. Jesus calls you to consider the scale of GRACE in practice, precisely because your forgiving, merciful, gracious heavenly Father has done it for you.

If we do not see the scale, we will never see the beam and it will never be removed. This metaphor that Jesus uses is so brilliant. I think this metaphor works both ways. If you have a speck in your eye, it should look like a beam! Unless your own sin looms large and like a beam to you, you are not going to be able to help anyone else. Because you are going to see yourself as better than them and that never works. And this is the beautiful work of the gospel. Because the Gospel tells us that all our sin is not a speck, it is all a beam. Big enough to separate us from a holy God for eternity. **How is our beam removed? Through the gospel of Jesus Christ-** he who knew no sin, became sin. He became our beam for us. He separates and removes the beam. Does this mean we never sin again? Of course not, but it does mean that our sin is paid for, and when we confess and repent of our sin he restores us tenderly. Living with a gospel awareness enables us to be ministers of God's grace and truth in the lives of others. To walk that knife's edge of balance with tenderness and grace, and truth. Oxygen mask first then, you can't help anyone else if you can't breathe.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer- **Three stages of spiritual maturity-** Stage 1- disgusted by everyone else's sin in the church. Spiritual infant at that point. Stage 2- When you become more disgusted and aware of your own sin than anyone else's sin. It's not that there is more or less of it, but that you see it more honestly as the beam. Stage 3- You reenter the church as the one who has received much mercy and grace and is ready to give much mercy and grace. Living a life aligned with the gospel. Todd Johnson, Dave Young, Jessica Thompson, Denny Harris, Jim Supp,

Shannan Keeler... just a few of the people in my life who were good, gospel physicians in my life.

**Do you know the grace and mercy of God in the gospel?** Maybe you are still trying to do your own self-surgery. Fix yourself up, do enough good things, maybe hide it so no one can see it, maybe hoping God doesn't see it. Or maybe ignore it and go on with life as if it doesn't exist. Opportunity.