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When Judging is Wrong and When It is Right; Matt 7:1-6

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Introduction – When we take a look at the entire sermon, it helps us to understand the context of where each passage fits into the whole. Otherwise, these individual sections of scripture almost appear to be disjointed, various topics without cohesion. That’s especially true of our passage today. If we just look at these verses, judging seems to be a random subject. One might ask why is Jesus teaching on this matter? At first it seems out of place. But we know that Jesus always speaks with purpose. He didn’t get His notes from His next sermon mixed up with His notes for this sermon.

I believe the connection has to do with how false righteousness misses the mark on living out true Christian faith. Just as false faith gets it wrong on the law and on worship, so it also fails in the day to day of the Christian life. So Jesus teaches on materialism and greed in 6:19-24 because false faith does not treasure God above all. Then He teaches on anxiety in 6:25-34 because false faith opens the door to worry if it all depends on us and we do not truly know the heavenly Father. Then here in 7:1-6, false faith leads to sinful judging of others because in order to keep up one’s appearance of a superior standard of faith, one must continually make others feel as if they just don’t measure up. That’s how the passage fits into the larger context. Now let’s see what the passage teaches us as a single unit.

- I. What “Judge not” Does Not Mean (vv1-2)
 - a. V1 has got to be one of the most misapplied verses in all of the Bible.
 - i. Most people don’t know where it is found, but they do like to quote it often when confronted with their own wrong doing. The conversation usually goes something like this: Someone says, “I don’t think what you’re doing is right.” And the reply is, “The Bible says Judge not.” And since the Bible does say that, often that’s where the conversation ends.
 - ii. Here’s the problem. Matthew 7:1 is not a general statement for all types of judgment. There are times Jesus calls us to make judgments, as we will see later in this very text.
 - iii. To take 7:1 as a blanket general statement would mean that there is not time in which moral judgments can be and must be

made. The Bible is replete with moral judgments. You don't have to go any further than the 10 Commandments to see that. It is wrong to worship any other being, thing, or person than God. It is wrong to take the life of an innocent human being. It is wrong to violate the marriage covenant. Some actions are right, that is, righteous, and some are wrong, that is, sinful.

- iv. "Judge not" does not mean we are not to make any moral judgments. Indeed, if someone has embraced a sinful idea or habit or lifestyle, the most loving thing we can do is to lovingly confront it with truth. Sin, if embraced, will always destroy and truth, if embraced, will always set free.
- v. Matt 7:1 is not a blanket, general statement; it is rather a specific statement against false righteousness making false judgments. Remember that's the context of the entire sermon.
- b. That's why Jesus issues the warning in v2. When the hypocrite with legalistic, self-made righteousness imposes his standard upon others with his notion of superior spirituality, just know as strict and as uncharitable and uncaring and dogmatically as he has judged others, he will be judged one day with the same merciless measure.

II. When Judging is Wrong (vv3-4)

- a. Jesus then provides an example in vv3-5 of how one judges who is judging wrongly.
- b. The problem with judging wrongly is its astounding, prideful hypocrisy. In fact, it is often the case that when the self-righteous critique others, the log is usually the pious pride, the superiority complex is evident to everyone who interacts with the self-righteous, except to the self-righteous. It's hard to see something that is sticking in your eye! But everybody else sees it. That's why we need each other! To help see the blind spots – not in judgment but in love.
 - i. The self-righteous have this uncanny, unrealistic ability to present themselves, to have this air about them, that they have it all together. Their lives are in top shape, completely whole, altogether right. And you, well you still have a long way to go. You still have a lot to work on. You still have many things

that are not right in your life, particularly that speck that's always in your eye.

- ii. The self-righteous are very observant to every little detail in everyone else's life but with amazing blindness fail to see the damaging, gospel-denying attitudes in their own hearts.
- iii. Sometimes the log in the self-righteous eye is the very same sin called out as the speck in a brother's eye. The hypocrisy of sin is at times its insanity. While we justify and cover and ignore our own sin, we become quick to condemn the very same sin in others. The unseen, unnoticed, unconfessed log in the eye can at times be a mammoth sierra!
- c. What the self-righteous hypocrite miserably, tragically fails to acknowledge is that we are all sinners in need of grace. We all have areas in our lives that need correction. We all have weaknesses, blind spots, temptations, failures. In one way or another, we are all broken. God does not call us to look down on others as if we are perfect, God calls us in our brokenness to lend a hand to the broken. We don't stand over one another; we stand with one another.
- d. The difference in attitude is stark in its contrast. The self-righteous says "Let me point out all the defects in your life." The truly righteous says, "Let's help each other. Let's learn from each other. Help me see what I can't see."

III. When Judging is Right (vv5-6)

- a. Judging is right when we've first dealt with our own sin and our own heart. When we've acknowledged our own sinful inclinations, our own pride, our own falling. The way to defeat the ugly pride of hypocrisy is the beauty of humility.
 - i. It's so very easy to tell if someone is judging you wrongly or rightly. If wrongly, you will easily recognize the air of superiority and false humility. If rightly, you will at once recognize the voice of empathy.
 - ii. "I am a sinner too. Let's join together and pray together and fight together. Let's not let this habit or lifestyle or false idea be our undoing."
 - iii. 1 Cor 10:12 – Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.

- iv. Galatians 6:1 – Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.
- v. Judging rightly begins with an awareness of our own sin and our own inclination to sin.
- b. Having said that, we are to take the speck out of the brother's eye. Jesus didn't say, "First remove the log out of your own eye and then don't worry about the speck in your brother's eye." He said, "Then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye."
 - i. Then we will have the right attitude, the right heart, the right approach. That speck, if left unchecked, will grow into a log and blind your brother. It must come out!
 - ii. Ill. Grain of dirt in the eye.
- c. Judging rightly is not only removing specks from each other's eyes but it is also discerning with whom our loving counsel is best spent.
 - i. Some see this verse as kin to where Jesus instructed the disciples that if they go to a home and their message is not received, shake the dust of their feet and go to where the gospel is received. That is certainly true and we need to be sensitive to the Spirit in knowing when to continue our witness to those hardened against the Lord and when to move on.
 - ii. Here, however, I believe the Lord is speaking about the self-righteous. If someone is convinced they are more spiritual than you and they have it all together and you don't, you will be wasting what is holy if you spend your energy trying to urge those who think they need no repentance that in fact that is exactly why they do need repentance.
 - iii. In fact, if you do lovingly and scripturally attempt to shed some light on their headstrong superior spirituality, they will turn on you and rip you to shreds.

Conclusion – 1. Be willing to listen to the gentle, loving rebuke of an empathetic, kind fellow believer. We all have blind spots. We all have specks. Sometimes God sends a brother or sister our way to help us see what we fail to see or refuse to see. 2. Be willing to be that empathetic believer who has first dealt with our own sin and then in that humble spirit, gently speak to your brother or sister about

that unseen speck. Don't wait until the speck becomes a log and damages your brother or sister for life. 3. Don't give ear to self-righteous judgment and don't be guilty of self-righteous judgment and don't throw your pearls to the self-righteous. Spend your effort and time with those, who likewise, know they are in need of grace.