

To Seek and To Save the Lost

Judging Others

Luke 6:37-42

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Judging Others

Scripture

Jesus opened his “Sermon on the Plain” with a description of the blessings that belong to those who have entered the kingdom of God, and a warning to those who have not yet entered the kingdom of God.

Then Jesus described how his disciples are to live as citizens of the kingdom of God. The first thing Jesus said to his disciples is that they are to love their enemies. Then Jesus said that his disciples must not judge others.

Let’s read about judging others in Luke 6:37-42:

³⁷ “Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; ³⁸ give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.”

³⁹ He also told them a parable: “Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? ⁴⁰ A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher. ⁴¹ 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? ⁴² How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,’ when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother’s eye.” (Luke 6:37-42)

Introduction

While driving in my car this week, I heard a story on the radio about a note a waiter had received from a couple he had

served at a Carrabba's Restaurant in Overland Park, KS. He had provided exemplary service to the couple, whom the talk show host described as Christians. The talk show host also said that the waiter was a homosexual. The following note to the waiter was written on the back of their check:

Thank you for your service, it was excellent. That being said, we cannot in good conscience tip you, for your homosexual lifestyle is an affront to GOD. (Homosexual slur) do not share in the wealth of GOD, and you will not share in ours. We hope you will see the tip your (homosexual slur) choices made you lose out on, and plan accordingly. It is never too late for GOD's love, but none shall be spared for (homosexual slur). May GOD have mercy on you.¹

I was not in my car for long, but I did hear several listeners call in and talk about the story with the talk show host. The common theme of their calls was that God loves everyone and that Christians should not judge. I did not listen long enough, but it would not have surprised me if someone quoted Jesus from today's text, "Judge not" (Luke 6:37a).

So, how should we as Christians think about this story? What did Jesus mean when he said to his disciples, "Judge not"?

Lesson

In today's lesson, we learn that because of seven exhortations given, Christians must not be judgmental.

I. Do Not Judge, And You Will Not Be Judged (6:37a)

The first exhortation is: do not judge, and you will not be judged.

¹ Article found at: <http://www.kctv5.com/story/23784990/anti-gay-customers-refuse-tip-to-server-other-patrons-rally-around-him>.

Jesus said in verse 37a, **“Judge not, and you will not be judged.”**

Dr. Philip Graham Ryken, formerly pastor of Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, PA and currently the President of Wheaton College in Wheaton, IL said that this “is one of the few Bible verses that non-Christians still seem to know.”² If you say anything that hints at being critical, a non-Christian may quickly respond with, “Do not judge!”

Nobody likes to be judged. People generally set their own rules and don’t like it when others point out their infractions. And so this is a favorite verse to quote so that others will leave them alone.

So, the question is: what did Jesus mean when he said, **“Judge not, and you will not be judged”**? Does Jesus mean that judgments should never be made?

Well, as soon as I put the question that way, most reasonable people will back off and acknowledge that some judgments must be made. But when? And how?

We need to acknowledge that there is a legitimate place for judging others. For example, Jesus is not ruling out the legitimate place of judging others in the civil arena or church courts. Judges must render verdicts in courts of law, elders must decide discipline cases in the church, managers must judge their employees’ performance, teachers must assess their students, and so on. Later in this very sermon, Jesus himself calls his disciples to judge people by their fruit (6:43-45).

It is important to keep in mind that Jesus was not speaking against *all* forms of judging others. It is irresponsible not to judge others whenever we are either asked or are in a position of authority to make moral or theological decisions.

On the other hand, there are times when Christians are called not to judge others, and this may be part of what Jesus

² Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke, Volume 1: Chapters 1 – 12* in Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 280.

means in this verse. But, as Dr. Ryken says,

Before making any judgments, we need to consider whether it is really our place to judge. We need to ask ourselves what our role is. If it is not our place to judge – as it often isn't – then we should keep our opinions to ourselves. Otherwise, we run the risk of overstepping our bounds, or even putting ourselves in the place of God, who alone has the right to judge.³

So, there are times when must not judge others. And there are times when we must judge others.

In our text, Jesus really is addressing the attitude of our hearts. Jesus is opposing *judgmentalism*. A judgmental person is someone whose judgment is unwarranted or improper.

This is what Jesus was warning against, as commentator Darrell Bock says:

The idea is rather a judgmental and censorious perspective toward others that holds them down in guilt and never seeks to encourage them toward God. What is commanded is an attitude that is hesitant to condemn and quick to forgive. What is prohibited is an arrogance that reacts with hostility to the worldly and morally lax, viewing such people as beyond God's reach.⁴

The couple in the restaurant in Overland Park, KS was wrong in what they did to the waiter. They were judgmental because they were not asked to render a judgment about the waiter's lifestyle nor where they in any official position to judge the waiter.

How about you and me? Are you quick to judge?

³ Philip Graham Ryken, 281.

⁴ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke: 1:1–9:50*, vol. 1, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1994), 605–606.

II. Do Not Condemn, And You Will Not Be Condemned (6:37b)

The second exhortation is: do not condemn, and you will not be condemned.

Jesus said in verse 37b, “. . . **condemn not, and you will not be condemned.**”

Condemnation of others is often an unwitting revelation of what is in us. An example of this occurred in the life of King David after his adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband Uriah. The prophet Nathan visited David and told the unsuspecting king the story of a rich man who took a poor man's pet lamb and slaughtered it to feed his guests. David was furious when he heard this story, and said to Nathan, “As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die, and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.”

Nathan said to David, “You are the man!” (2 Samuel 12:5-7).

David, though he had committed far greater sins of adultery and murder by stealing a man's wife, was blind to his own guilt even as he was quick to condemn the same sin in another.

Are you quick to condemn?

III. Forgive, And You Will Be Forgiven (6:37c)

The third exhortation is: forgive, and you will be forgiven.

Jesus said in verse 37c, “. . . **forgive, and you will be forgiven.**”

Jesus now switches to the positive. Forgiveness is promised to those who forgive.

That is not to say that there is a kind of *quid pro quo* as if God owes forgiveness to any person who forgives another. No, what Jesus is teaching is that “true Christians can and do for-

give. This is not to say that they do not struggle with forgiving, or that they are free from battles with bitterness or hatred, or that they are never so hurt and in such emotional shock that they are unable to respond with forgiveness, but it is to say that they work at forgiving and ultimately do forgive.”⁵

Jesus’ disciples forgive.

W. E. Sangster, the beloved pastor of London’s Westminster Central Hall during the 1940s and 1950s, wrote:

It was Christmas time in my home. One of my guests had come a couple of days early and saw me sending off the last of my Christmas cards. He was startled to see a certain name and address. “Surely, you are not sending a greeting card to him,” he said.

“Why not?” I asked.

“But you remember,” he began, “eighteen months ago ...”

I remembered then, the thing the man had publicly said about me, but I remembered also resolving at the time with God’s help, that I had remembered to forget. And God had “made” me forget!

I posted the card.⁶

Who is the person you need to forgive?

IV. Give, And It Will Be Given To You (6:38)

The fourth exhortation is: give, and it will be given to you.

Jesus said in verse 38a, “. . . **give, and it will be given to you.**”

Jesus calls his disciples to do more than forgive. They are to **give**. It is one thing to forgive a person for what that person did to you, but it is another thing altogether to go a step further and do something to bless that person.

⁵ R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: That You May Know the Truth*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 234.

⁶ R. Kent Hughes, *Luke*, 234.

This is of course what Jesus has done for us, isn't it? He has not only forgiven us, but more than that he blesses us on a daily basis far more than we deserve. Now he calls his disciples to give the people who wronged us more grace than they deserve.

One woman who offered more grace was the victim of a horrible crime:

A Turkish officer raided and looted an Armenian home. He killed the aged parents and gave the daughters to the soldiers, keeping the eldest daughter for himself. Some time later she escaped and trained as a nurse. As time passed, she found herself nursing in a ward of Turkish officers. One night, by the light of a lantern, she saw the face of this officer. He was so gravely ill that without exceptional nursing he would die. The days passed, and he recovered. One day, the doctor stood by the bed with her and said to him, "But for her devotion to you, you would be dead." He looked at her and said, "We have met before, haven't we?" "Yes," she said, "we have met before." "Why didn't you kill me?" he asked. She replied, "I am a follower of him who said, 'Love your enemies.'"⁷

The Armenian woman did more for her enemy that simply forgive him. She offered him the gift of love. She learned this from Jesus, who first loved her.

Jesus wants his disciples to forgive others. And then he wants his disciples to go even further by giving a blessing to those forgiven. Jesus said in verse 38b, **"Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you."**

Here is how one scholar describes this ancient custom:

The measuring of the corn is a process which is carried

⁷ L. Gregory Jones, *Embodying Forgiveness: A Theological Analysis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 265-266.

out according to an established pattern. The seller crouches on the ground with the measure between his legs. First of all he fills the measure three-quarters full and gives it a good shake with a rotatory motion to make the grains settle down. Then he fills the measure to the top and gives it another shake. Next he presses the corn together strongly with both hands. Finally he heaps it into a cone, tapping it carefully to press the grains together; from time to time he bores a hole in the cone and pours a few more grains into it, until there is literally no more room for a single grain. In this way, the purchaser is guaranteed an absolutely full measure; it cannot hold more.⁸

This is the superabundant blessing that Jesus gives his disciples when they give a blessing to others. Jesus is forgiving to the forgiving, and generous to the generous, pouring a full measure right into our laps. And though we know we will receive God's full measure in the next life, sometimes it even happens in this life.

A legendary example of "measure for measure" comes from the life of a poor Scottish farmer named Fleming. One day the farmer heard a cry for help coming from a nearby bog. There, mired to his waist in black muck, was a terrified boy, screaming and struggling to free himself. Farmer Fletcher saved the boy from what could have been a slow and terrifying death. The next day, a fancy carriage pulled up to the Scotsman's humble dwelling. An elegantly dressed nobleman stepped out and introduced himself as the father of the boy Farmer Fleming had saved. "I want to repay you," the nobleman said. "You saved my son's life." The Scottish farmer refused the offer, but at that moment, his own son came to the door. "Is that your son?" the nobleman asked. "Let me take him and give a good education. If the boy is anything like his father, he'll grow to a man you can be proud of."

Time went by, and the farmer's son graduated from St.

⁸ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, 607–608.

Mary's Hospital Medical School in London. He later became better known throughout the world as Sir Alexander Fleming, the discoverer of penicillin. Many years later, when the nobleman's son was stricken with pneumonia, the very drug that Fleming had discovered saved his life. He too was a famous man. His name was Sir Winston Churchill.⁹

Whether we receive a full measure now or not, we will receive it when we enter the immeasurable joy of heaven.

V. Do Not Follow a Blind Man (6:39)

The fifth exhortation is: do not follow a blind man.

In verse 39, Jesus **also told them a parable: "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit?"**

Perhaps Jesus was referring to the scribes and Pharisees, whom he called "blind guides" (Matthew 23:16, 24). The point is simple: do not follow spiritual leaders who will lead you astray.

VI. Choose Your Teacher Carefully (6:40)

The sixth exhortation is: choose your teacher carefully.

Jesus said in verse 40, **"A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher."**

Be very careful whom you follow. Be careful whom you read. Be careful whom you watch on TV.

If you follow teachers who are shallow or, worse, wrong, you will suffer spiritually. So, choose your teacher carefully.

⁹ Quoted in Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke*, 285. Ryken notes that various versions of this story have circulated since the 1950s. It is called a "legendary example" because there are reasons to doubt its accuracy. Even as a legend, though, the story can be used to illustrate a biblical point.

V. Do Not Be Hypocritical (6:41-42)

And the seventh exhortation is: do not be hypocritical.

Jesus said in verses 41-42, **“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? How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,’ when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother’s eye.”**

A **speck** is a tiny splinter, and a **log** is the main beam of a building. Jesus is really trying show the absurdity of picking at someone else’s fault while ignoring one’s own fault.

This common failing is known as hypocrisy. It occurs whenever we think that our sins are small while the sins of others are big.

There is a place for confronting the sins of others. But, as a general rule we should be slow to confront others and be quick to take care of the sin in our own lives.

Conclusion

Therefore Christians must not be judgmental.

Let us remember that Jesus sees us as we really are. He bore God’s judgment and condemnation in our place. He forgave us and gave his life for us. He calls his disciples not to follow blind guides but to follow him. He calls us to abandon hypocrisy.

And we do all of this out of love for him who has made it possible for us to enter the kingdom of God. Amen.

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and membership in his church family,
develop them to Christlike maturity,
equip them for their ministry in the church
and life mission in the world,
in order to magnify God's name.*

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PRAYER:

O Lord our God, thank you for send your Son, Jesus, into this world. Thank you for his birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and present session at your right hand. And thank you for Jesus' Sermon on the plain.

Help us not to be judgmental of others. Help us to forgive and to give to those who have wronged us. Help us to model and reflect Christ to a lost and dying world.

And for this I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

BENEDICTION:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and always. Amen.

CHARGE:

Now, brothers and sisters, go and serve God wholeheartedly!