

JUDGMENT 101

Introduction

This morning we are going to spend our time in [Matthew 7:1-6](#), where Jesus gives us a basic lesson in judgment and discernment.

Discernment means to separate things from one another at their points of difference. The Old Testament word describes the space between things, or how things differ from one another. The New Testament word means to separate, to see and recognize the difference between one thing and another.

Spiritual discernment is not just discernment of spiritual things, but discernment given by the Spirit of God, who imparts to Christians the mind of Christ, so that we would know the difference between the things of God and the things of the world.

The Bible tells us, from Genesis to Revelation, that God's thoughts and deeds are separate from all other thoughts and deeds. There are not multiple ways to please God; there is only one. Any thought or deed that is not completely God's is wrong, sinful, and must be rejected.

The world functions in a very different way. Everything is gray. There are very few absolutes, and when the world does identify an absolute, it quickly creates loopholes and special cases, so that the absolute is actually relative.

In God's Kingdom, which is the subject of the Sermon on the Mount, there are only two destinies for mankind – heaven or hell. People are saved or lost. There are only two paths – one broad, one narrow. There are only two gates – one broad, one narrow. People belong to the Kingdom of God or the kingdom of darkness. God's Law brings about either blessing or a curse. John speaks of those who are with us, and those who against us. The Bible speaks of life and death, truth and falsehood, good and bad, light and darkness, the Kingdom of God and the domain of Satan, love and hate, spiritual wisdom and the wisdom of the world.

The Bible is full of crystal clear distinctions.

When Jesus speaks of judgment and discernment in these verses, He means for us to understand and embrace two absolute truths.

Let's read [Matthew 7:1-6](#), then consider it.

Matthew 7:1-6 2016 ESV

“Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. 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? 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? 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. “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.

Let's pray!

Judge Not

Matthew 7:1-2 2016 ESV

“Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.

As we've already seen, God created His world to have only two options: His Kingdom, and everything else. So let's begin with a very basic truth: we are not God. We have no right to sit in His judgment seat, and judge as He judges.

How does God judge?

- God's judgment is perfectly righteous and Trinitarian ([Acts 17:31](#)). There is perfect agreement within the Trinity regarding judgment; there is never disagreement between the Father, Son, and Spirit.
- God's judgment is upon both acts of sin, and the secret intentions of the heart. His knowledge of each person's actions and each person's thoughts and intentions is perfect and complete; He doesn't miss anything.

- God's judgment means inflicting holy wrath on sinners for their outward actions and their inward intentions, and they will be conscious of their judgment for all eternity.
- God's judgment is fully deserved by sinners. When He shows mercy it is by His grace; He is never obligated to be merciful.
- God's judgment can fall at anytime, as when Herod Agrippa was struck down by the angel of the Lord ([Acts 12:23](#)). God is not obligated to wait until the end of time to judge a sinner.
- Finally, God reserves the right of judgment for Himself alone. No Christian, and no church, has the right to sit in His judgment seat, and pass judgment against anyone.

When Jesus commands us to **judge not**, it's not because He doesn't want us to criticize others; in fact, we're going to see in verse 6 that we **MUST** make judgments about others. Jesus commands us to **judge not** because judgment belongs to God. Those who think they can sit in His judgment seat and condemn others will themselves face His judgment. We must not presume that our attitudes or beliefs represent the holy judgment of God. We have been given a different message to convey:

2 Corinthians 5:20 2016 ESV

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

To emphasize this, Jesus goes on to say, **For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.**

So if I look upon a person and say, according to my own sense of right and wrong, and the offense I feel at their actions or words, "You are going to hell," I am utterly wrong, and fully deserve the judgment of God for daring to sit in His seat.

Jesus rebuked James and John for this. A Samaritan village refused to show hospitality to Jesus, because He was heading to Jerusalem for Passover week, and His crucifixion.

Luke 9:54–55 2016 ESV

And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, “Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?” But he turned and rebuked them.

Some manuscripts add the words, *and He said, You do not know what manner of spirit you are of; for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.*

Why did Jesus rebuke James and John? For daring to pass divine judgment on these people. God sent down fire to kill and consume Aaron’s sons, Nadab and Abihu, when they arrogantly decided for themselves how they would worship. Moses didn’t kill them, even though he was standing right there. God has the right to execute judgment; we don’t.

The brothers of Joseph sold him into slavery when he was just a teenager. They decided that they had the right to stand in judgment against him for his attitude toward them. As a result, Joseph suffered greatly, although eventually Yahweh gave him a place of privilege and power in Egypt. At the end of the story they came to Joseph, fearing that he would take vengeance on them, because that’s what they had done to them. This is what he said to them,

Genesis 50:19–20 2016 ESV

But Joseph said to them, “Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

Notice that Joseph DOESN’T say that they were innocent of wrongdoing; in fact, he makes it clear that they were wrong – **you meant it for evil**. Neither does Joseph say that there will be no judgment against them, only that it won’t come from him – **Do not fear [me], for am I in the place of God?** Certainly their actions deserved judgment, but Joseph humbly and faithfully left that judgment in the hands of God.

Joseph knew what James and John didn’t know – judgment belongs to God alone.

James 4:12 2016 ESV

There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy.
But who are you to judge your neighbor?

Romans 2:1–3 2016 ESV

Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God?

So, we are not to stand in judgment on another person. To do so is to commit blasphemy, taking upon ourselves what is reserved for God alone.

Jesus goes on to about you and I trying to remove a speck of dust from someone's eye, while we ourselves have logs in our own eyes.

THE SPECK AND THE LOG

Matthew 7:3–5 2016 ESV

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? 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? 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.

Now, this is not about how to help someone else. Jesus is not saying, "Before you talk to someone else about their prayer life, make sure that your prayer life is perfect." These words are still within the context of passing judgment on another person. Jesus' point is, who are we to pass judgment on the *speck* of sin in someone else's life, when there is a *log* of sin in our own life? That other person may not realize that there is a log of sin in our own lives, but God certainly knows.

You see, when we stand in judgment against another person, which means that

- we judge them as though we had God's authority,
- with the right and the power to see into their hearts,
- with the ability to perfectly understand their motivations,
- with complete knowledge of each and every one of their sinful acts,
- choosing to pronounce them guilty and sentence them to punishment based on our own standard of right and wrong,

we are hypocrites, pretending that we ourselves don't deserve judgment and never needed a Savior. We insult the God of glory and grace. We commit the sin of blasphemy by putting ourselves in His place.

In [Matthew 7:1-5](#), then, Jesus completely and utterly demolishes any idea that you and I can stand in judgment on another person. He makes it clear that we are sinners, too, and that being converted doesn't give us a special ability to condemn others.

Warning of God's Judgment

Judge not, lest you be judged. That's clear enough.

But what if we warn others of the judgment of God? Is that prohibited? What if I tell someone what Paul says in Acts 17:30-31?

Acts 17:30-31 2016 ESV

The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

Or what if I tell someone what [Romans 3](#) says?

Romans 3:10-12 2016 ESV

as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one."

What I tell someone what Jesus Himself says?

John 3:18 2016 ESV

Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

Am I guilty of judging another person when I tell them what God says in His Word?
No, of course not.

You see, the Gospel is not “Hey, I’ve got good news! You’re a great person and God loves you just as you are; just relax and enjoy life!”

The Gospel is “Hey, I’ve got good news! You’re a sinner in imminent danger of the judgment of God, but God sent His Son as a substitute, and if you trust in Him you will be saved from the torment you so richly deserve!”

When we share the Gospel truthfully and correctly, we are not the ones passing judgment. We are the ones telling others that judgment has already been passed. Every human being is already guilty and condemned for their sin. There is a very, very brief space of time between being condemned as a sinner, and the execution of the sentence, which is eternal torment in hell.

Hebrews 9:27 2016 ESV

And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment,

Right now, while there is mortal life, there is an opportunity to receive mercy. Jesus Christ died on the cross as a substitute for each and every person whom the Father chose for His own glory. The preaching of the Gospel is still the means by which sinners are saved and brought into the Kingdom of God as children of God.

Once a person dies, there is no longer an opportunity for mercy. As long as there is life, there is hope that a sinner will respond to the Gospel and be saved.

BRINGING IT HOME

Let's bring this home to our lives.

First, we must not presume to speak as God, or to occupy His judgment seat.

It's not a small thing to believe that we can be like Him, as Lucifer discovered when he insisted,

Isaiah 14:13-14 2016 ESV

You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.'

Lucifer was cast out of heaven, and became Satan – the Enemy – and the devil – the Slanderer.

When we dare to sit in the seat of God to pass judgment on another person, we make ourselves enemies and adversaries. Don't do that.

Second, we must tell people that God's judgment is real and inescapable.

We are not violating Jesus' command to **judge not** when we tell others that they are under the judgment of God. The Lord has already passed judgment on them; that's why they need a Savior. Once they die, it will be too late to receive mercy; that's why they need to believe now. That's why Hebrews says, several times, "TODAY, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts." No one knows if they have a tomorrow, or even a 'this afternoon.' Today is the day of salvation. If we refuse to tell sinners that the hand of God could fall on them at any moment, then we are editing the Gospel we have been given to preach.

And third, Jesus' command **judge not** does not mean that we are to avoid practicing biblical discernment, biblical criticism, of all that takes place around us. The Scriptures are full of commands to discern and divide and distinguish and differentiate. We will take up that truth next week.