

Judging Your Brother

Call to Worship: Psalm 46

1st Scripture: Luke 6:27-42

2nd Scripture: Matthew 7:1-5

Hymn #20- *Give to Our God Immortal Praise*

Hymn Insert- *By Faith*

Hymn Insert- *His Mercy is More*

Introduction

Working through our Lord's "Sermon on the Mount," we have come to a section that deals primarily with the sinful *actions* of the religious leaders of Israel. To this end, our Lord has been instructing His disciples about the nature of God's Kingdom, and how His subjects ought not to adopt the erroneous teachings or sinful behaviors of the religious leaders, all of which, were outward in their appeal, evidencing that what God is after most, a changed heart, was not in them.

This morning, we continue along with this same theme, as we seek to address what is probably *the most* abused text in all of Scripture. Most people, even those having little to no Scriptural background, have said and/or heard the statement, "Judge not, lest you be judged." And generally, this statement is used as a means of excusing sin, and disarming any who would seek to confront others about their immoral habits. The idea is that, "Hey, we are all sinners anyway; you're not perfect, I'm not perfect, so, let's just lay aside this whole notion of confronting one another about our sins. Don't judge me, as if you are perfect. And remember, you have your share of baggage as well. We all sin." To this end, the whole concept of honoring the holiness of God, and working toward sanctification of any sort, is just heaped out the window, and replaced with a "Jesus died for everyone's sins, anyway" type of mentality.

Now, as gross as such a misuse and abuse of Scripture is, on the other side of the coin, this text does mean something, doesn't it? And so, our desire ought to be to get to the bottom of what all of Scripture teaches, without allowing one truth to contradict another, while allowing each text to say what it says, within its own context. And brethren, the key to unlocking this text, is to remember that it has a broader context. And so, this morning, we move on then to consider our Lord's warning here, about wrongfully judging one another.

I. Key Contextual Reminders

Let us begin then, before even opening the text, by considering some key contextual reminders, which ought to help us rightly interpret and apply the meaning of this text.

1) It is extremely important that we remind ourselves that whatever our Lord is addressing here, it has some significant connection to the sinful behaviors of the religious leaders, with whom our Lord is contrasting the true subjects of His kingdom. And so, we ought to find the identifying traits of this kind of wicked judgmental spirit within the religious leaders of Israel, and this ought to help us locate its relevant application for us.

2) While this form of judging certainly bears some form of universal application, it is especially directed toward how *the brethren* treat each other. Three times, Jesus uses the term “brother,” here, emphasizing the fact that this type of a judgmental spirit is especially forbidden against the brethren (read vs. 3, 4 & 5). And so, again, this is not to say that there is not a universal application which ought to be drawn from this text, but it is primarily dealing with how the brethren treat each other, as emphasized by our Lord.

3) Finally, let us continue to bear in mind, that in keeping with the rest of the Sermon on the Mount, there is a *heart* issue that our Lord is addressing here. Coming back to the matter of the heart then, will help us get to the bottom of what our Lord’s true intention is, when He speaks of not judging one another.

And so, having these three key contextual reminders in mind (the example of the Pharisees, the primary emphasis on how we treat the brethren, and looking at the heart/motives of the matter) will greatly serve to help us unlock the meaning of our Lord’s command here. With that said, let us then make our way through the text.

II. Judging Your Brother

“Judge not, that you be not judged” (vs. 1). Beginning then, with this first statement, let us hone in on the word “judge” for a moment. What does the word “judge” mean here? Sadly, because of the way in which our modern day culture loves to distort words (for purposes of self-justifying our sins), it is too easy to infuse the misuses of the term from our day, into the proper

meaning that was intended by our Lord here. And then, we conveniently misuse the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ to give support to our case.

As you know, words like “love” (which has come to mean giving approval to anything anyone else does) and “hate” (which has come to mean disagreeing with anything anyone else does), have lost their true meaning in our day. From a biblical standpoint, confronting someone with their sin, in the right spirit, is actually an expression of love to that individual. But, when God is removed from the equation, we are left to our own standards, which means that “right and wrong” are *relative*, rather than *universal* in their scope. In the same way, people throw around the term “judging” today, to imply any form of disagreeing or even failing to give approval to their lifestyle. And so, when Christians take a stand against any form of immorality, they are accused of wrongly and hatefully “judging” others, and the Lord Jesus Christ’s words here (infused with our modern-day distortion of the word “judging”) are pinned against the Christian. And worse, many professing Christians even, have also adopted these distortions, turning their sights against other Christians, who dare take a stand against any form of societal immorality.

And so, we must begin then with defining our Lord’s use of the word “judge” here, before getting to the heart of the matter. When our Lord speaks of not “judging” here, He is *not* saying, in contradiction to all of Scripture and even His own words and actions throughout the course of His ministry, that we should never address the sins and wrongs of others. He is not contradicting John the Baptist, who called King Herod to repent of his adultery, as if to say, “Hey, John, you are a sinner too. Stop judging King Herod. Stop being unloving and just love him into My Kingdom.” No, that is not what our Lord is saying here.

What then is He saying? Well, when you think of the term “judging,” it involves not simply addressing the wrong in someone else, but rather, bringing forth a verdict of condemnation. It is to slam the gavel down and to declare the individual guilty, without any recourse or hope of rectifying things. Again, we see this so clearly in the lives of the Pharisees and Scribes of our Lord’s day. Remember, it wasn’t that their accusations against tax collectors and sinners were completely unfounded, but rather, not seeing their own sin, they left no avenue for mercy, restoration, or hope for sinners. They simply condemned them, and presented themselves as the standard of righteousness, which others needed, in order to win God’s favor.

And to this end, they kept most from entering the kingdom of God. They had lost every notion of mercy and grace, and addressed sinners, not unto seeking their restoration, but unto declaring their irrevocable condemnation. That's why they could not come to grips with the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ ate with, and had fellowship with tax collectors and sinners.

And so, this "judging," involves casting a self-righteous declaration of condemnation upon others, and most specifically, against those who shared in the same covenant with them...their own brethren. It is seen so well in the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector, where the Pharisee stands up tall at the temple, boasting in all of his "good deeds," while looking down upon the worthless tax collector, who, way in the back, beating his breast, can hardly lift his head, because he is so overwhelmed by the guilt of his sin. Or, in the story of the woman caught in adultery, where the religious leaders are all anxious to stone the adulterous woman, until the Lord confronts them with their own sin, which leads them to toss their stones to the ground and walk away. This is the type of judging that our Lord is addressing here. It is a hypocritical and convenient ignoring of one's own sin, accompanied by a self-righteous condemning of others. This is light years away from the loving rebuke, which all Christians are responsible to give to one another, motivated by the desire to bring about reconciliation (with God and others) and not condemnation.

And so, when our Lord says, "Judge not, that you be not judged," He is saying then, that we ought not to cast this type of a derisive eye against our brethren, lest God Himself holds us to the same standard, and we find ourselves equally condemned by our own words. We, who constantly cling to the lifeline of divine grace, ought to be very slow to cut that line from the veins of other "never-dying," precious souls. Christians, of all people, ought to be very slow to condemn, and very anxious to extend grace, and they ought to be perpetual proponents of reconciliation and not condemnation, and especially (but not limited to) the brethren. Hear this further affirmed by our Lord's statements that follow:

"For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you" (vs. 2). When we play the jury and cast a condemning eye against others, and especially our brethren; and when our eye is ungracious and self-righteous, and not set toward the good and welfare of others (seeking about their reconciliation), God will extend

the same measure of grace toward us. He will hold us to the same standard, toward which, we hold others. But, when we rebuke/correct one another, with the right and humble heart; when our motives are good and unto reconciling ends; when our concern is for the well being of others and not to simply see them condemned, God will continue to extend such a gracious and compassionate look toward us. This is especially relevant, brethren, when we are dealing with a sinning brother/sister, who is exhibiting signs of genuine sorrow and repentance. The Pharisees left no room for hope of forgiveness and change. They simply condemned.

This is why the former prostitute woman was so overwhelmed with love toward Jesus, that she washed His feet with her hair and tears. He offered her a path of forgiveness, grace and reconciliation with God, which she had never found from the religious leaders of her time. She was blocked from hope by the religious leaders. She was an irreparable outcast, who could never achieve the standard that they put before her, as an only means to God. Jesus offered her grace. He wouldn't allow her to remain in her sin. He didn't "cheerlead" her in her sin, and say, "Don't worry, you can do whatever you want, and God will love you." No, He nursed her to the place where she could be restored to God, by genuine repentance and faith in Him. The religious leaders were blind to their own self-righteous, proud and arrogant hearts, and therefore, they would be judged by God, according to the same measure that they had used to judge others.

Such a view unto reconciliation; such a redemptive mindset, ought to be that which governs the hearts and minds of those who are truly part of Christ's kingdom, and especially, because we ourselves depend upon God for the same quality of grace that we are called to offer to others.

Moving on, our Lord adds, "And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? 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? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye" (vs. 3-5).

These additional statements add another dimension to all that our Lord is saying here. Here, He is especially seeking to highlight the gross offense and danger of hypocrisy. To this end, our Lord knows that it is so much easier for us to see the faults in others (even to the

minutest degree), while missing the gaping offenses in ourselves. This all the more should compel us, both, to examine our own hearts first, and then, to extend great kindness, grace and compassion toward others who are erring. The analogy here is powerful. The “beam/plank” that our Lord speaks about here, is a major wooden support beam in a house. It is large, to say the least. And so, He says, as it were, before you seek to wipe away the dust particles from your brother’s eyes, so that he can see and act better, try concentrating on the massive beam that is in your own eye first, so that you can see properly. And then, seeing properly, you will be able to better correct your brother, and deal with his saw dust.

And so, again, the issue our Lord takes here, is not with those who have the righteous desire to fulfill God’s command to lovingly correct and rebuke one another. It is, in fact, unloving to leave a brother or sister in ongoing sin. However, on the other side of the coin, we ought to ensure that our motives and hearts are right, that we are restorative toward our brethren and not overly judgmental, and that we spend more time being concerned about our own sin first, before seeking to pick apart the minutia of offenses committed by our brethren. And to this end, we want to come to the table of mutual edification (in the church) with a sense of recognizing that we are all in this “sin-killing” war together. Again, there is no room for self-righteousness or condemnation in the church. There is no room for high-nosing or looking down upon others who are genuinely struggling with sin in the body...because, if we are honest, we are all struggling in this battle, one way or the other. Dealing with our own beams will provide us with the right attitude and heart, which will enable us to graciously and tenderly help others. Not dealing with our own beams, will actually serve to lead us to self-righteously judge and condemn others, because we are (perhaps willfully) blind to our own condition.

All in all, brethren, there is indeed a call for God-honoring, biblical confrontation in the church. That is the responsibility of us all. And sometimes, when dealing with an unrepentant brother, that can take on a more stern and severe warning. However, we always want to be careful that we confront one another with the right heart, motives and tone, recalling that we are all fighting against the same monster of “self.” There is no room for arrogance, pride or a judgmental, condemning spirit in Christ’s church. Like our Heavenly Father, we ought to desire “mercy and not sacrifice.” An inward, deep love and care for the brethren (and others), should

hold more weight in our hearts than mere religious acts of service. This is life in the Kingdom of God; this is the fruit of a heart that is in tune with the beatitudes and the Christ of the beatitudes; this is the very essence of the Sermon on the Mount; and this is antithetical to everything that the religious leaders of our Lord's time stood for.

III. Concluding Thoughts

1) The fact of the matter is, brethren, that sin is always an ugly reality, and especially to the redeemed mind. The Spirit of God in us, and our new nature, lead us to be repulsed by sin, and so, it is now natural for us to be troubled by it. However, the irony is that we can even be driven by our sin nature, to respond to the sin of others in an ungracious way, because sin now bothers us. Even what we know to be true, is still processed by a nature that is presently affected by remaining sin, and this can lead us to sinfully respond, especially to the sin in others. And so, we need to be consciously aware of this, because the propensity of our fallen nature, drives us even to take the good that has now been revealed to us in Christ, and to distort and misuse that good, unto the harm of our brethren, and that, even in the name of zeal and love for Christ. Having a "judgmental" spirit, is the fruit of self-righteousness, cloaked in an alleged zeal for the glory of God. And this natural propensity is in all of us. That is why we have to constantly check our motives, and to bring them before God in prayer, ensuring that our desire to confront one another springs out of a sincere desire to glorify Christ, which will always lead us to ensure that we are truly concerned about the spiritual and physical well-being of others. Doing this will lead us to cover certain non-grievous and irregular sins, while addressing those sins that need to be addressed, in a gracious, humble, restorative manner.

2) Some of us always carry certain "creature-comfort" products around, no matter where we go. I always, always, always, carry chapstick in my pocket, because I dread getting chapped lips. I may only use it a few times throughout the day, but I always have it ready and handy in my pocket. And when I don't have it, without fail, my lips will always become suddenly, dreadfully dry. It's a mental thing, I'm sure, but I live with it, nonetheless. Well brethren, let me suggest that we all carry an invisible can of "grace-spray" with us, at all times, wherever we go.

Let us mentally ensure that we always have it with us. And when we seem to have forgotten it, let us pray and seek a refill from God, before going forward into the remainder of our day.

Because brethren, we will need it constantly, if we are going to respond graciously, kindly, compassionately and in a non-judgmental way, to those who enter into our sphere of influence throughout the day. We need to be ready to put the best interpretation on people's words, to cover offenses, and to have a restorative attitude and not a condemning one. And this means that we have to have a very, very, very, long and slow fuse. And the moment we fall into that, "I can't tolerate people anymore," mindset or attitude, we need to step back and consider the way, in which, God consistently tolerates us. We are walking wind-bags of offense; there is still so much that is contra and anti-God within us, brethren, at every moment. And yet, God continues to love and bless us, with all sincerity, in Christ. Let me put it this way. The moment we start looking at others with a jaundiced, judgmental eye, let us realize that, in a very real sense, we are forgetting that we are only acceptable to God, because we wear the robe of another. Imagine if God ever decided to look upon us, outside of Christ? We would be eternally shattered at that very moment. And so, brethren, carry that grace-spray!

3) If you are unsaved, this morning; if you are not a Christian, you have to understand that while Christians are called to lovingly reach out to you, always offering you the hope of the Gospel in Christ, that at the same time, you are presently condemned by God. And He has every right to condemn you. And if you die in that condemned state, that condemnation will be forever manifested in the agony, pain and regret that you must and will endure in hell. Sin may offer you temporal, quick-fix comforts in this life, but it comes with eternal consequences, because they are offenses committed against an eternal, all holy and righteous God.

Repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ... [Note: God's willingness to save!!!]

Amen!!!

Benediction: Jude 1:24-25