

## **Red Letters** | The Sermons of Jesus Christ

### **Don't Judge Me, Bro!**

Matthew 6.33-7.12

4.3.22

<sup>6.33</sup> *"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. <sup>34</sup> So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

<sup>7.1</sup> *"Do not judge so that you will not be judged. <sup>2</sup> "For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. <sup>3</sup> "Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? <sup>4</sup> "Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye? <sup>5</sup> "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.*

<sup>6</sup> *"Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.*

<sup>7</sup> *"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. <sup>8</sup> "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. <sup>9</sup> "Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? <sup>10</sup> "Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? <sup>11</sup> "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!*

<sup>12</sup> *"In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.*

**We're looking at *The Sermon on the Mount*, and here in this one section there's evidence that this really IS the most famous sermon ever preached.**

It's so ingrained in the cultural vocabulary of the Western World that I dare say most people in our time and place, even non-Bible-readers have heard of two phrases in this section: the Golden Rule (v. 12: "do unto others as you'd have them do to you") and "Judge not lest ye be judged." (v. 1) So what do these words mean? How do they hold together with the main themes of the Sermon on the Mount and what DO they mean *for life in your home, your office or workplace, neighborhood and church?*

**Specifically, 1) What does it mean/not mean to judge people and why's it so hard to stop?**

**2) What's the Key to avoiding it?**

**3) What's the Alternative (in practical terms)?**

In a great article called, "First Impressions and Snap Judgments" by Davis Johnson, the writer asks why we, as human beings, are "unfree... when it comes to first impressions? When meeting someone for the first time, the other person makes a thousand judgment calls in a fraction of a second that give them pause or instant warmth. Strangers unconsciously assess us in the blink of an eye. They judge the shirt we're wearing, how unkempt our hair is, the way we smile, or how we shake hands. And we're doing the exact same thing to them."

Our society is telling us NOT to do this – "Don't judge me, Bro!" but we don't seem capable of being free from making snap judgments and first impressions.

So what IS Jesus Christ saying here and what's He NOT saying (that our society has perhaps misunderstood) and why can't we stop?

We could begin by saying that the word "judge" in the Bible has a broad range of meaning. It could mean to discern or to condemn or to defend (as in the Book of Judges 2.18; Ps 82, 140.12 et al) BUT here it seems to mean, to discern a fault, to recognize a flaw and be ready to criticize the offender.

In our society this well-known phrase means to offer any negative evaluation of another person. And IN our time/place this MAY be thĒ number-one, most important mandate Jesus ever issued... even though many people think it or quote it or try live by it NOT knowing that it came from Jesus in the Sermon. "Don't judge me, Bro!" It's the Tolerance Mandate!

But virtually everyone HAS to know that it can't be a blanket prohibition against evaluation or even plain condemnation of evil actions/people. In other words: if you witness a murder and are asked about it, you wouldn't say, "Hey! Who am I to judge?!"

And, as we've already indicated, Jesus goes on in v.6 to require some kind of moral evaluation of others when he tells us NOT to cast our pearls before swine – that command can't be carried out without some sort of assessment or judgment – one has to be able to say, "This person is a dog/pig when it comes to holy things... like a Gentile who has utter disdain for things sacred and spiritually valuable." It's judgment.

"So, T.J. ...we are allowed to and even charged to make certain moral/spiritual critiques...even outright condemnations of certain actions and people...Great, because I think THESE people are awful!"

Well, hold on because NOW we have to see what Jesus Christ IS saying! To paraphrase: "don't impose a measure or standard of judgment on someone else that YOU wouldn't want imposed on YOU. In the way you judge, you will BE judged."

And the illustration attached to the command is a question, “Why do you see the speck in your brother’s eye but don’t notice/consider the log in your own eye?” And He asks the question as if this is a universal tendency among His disciples... “Why do YOU look at the petty offense in the life of your brother but somehow not ponder the plank in your own eye...?”

“And where do you get the nerve... in somehow overlooking your OWN gigantic evil which is blocking your whole field of vision, to lord yourself over this other petty offender, suggesting that YOU could be the one to help HIM get rid of his terrible crime that’s really only a tiny infraction - YOUR 2x4 and your brother’s splinter.”

See there’s a kind of secular misuse of this teaching where someone says, “Sure, I’m totally into myself and completely selfish (#Winning!) but I don’t judge anyone else for it – live and let live – don’t judge me, Bro... I don’t judge so I know I won’t BE judged.”

But frankly, the bigger offenders are the religious folks who have a lot of moral scruples/convictions, which, truth-be-told, they don’t always keep... but they judge the heck out of others!

I judge gamblers... because that’s really NOT at all a temptation for me. Every other vice appeals to me but gambling... So it’s easy for me to condemn gamblers and gambling... and see my own sins and temptations as small...if I see them at all.

Bottom line is that morally observant people are sometimes (is that the right word or is it OFTEN or is it ALWAYS?) ridiculously blind to their own BIG flaws that everyone else can see in their lives... but until we deal with our own STUFF it’s dangerous and harmful for us to attempt helping others. (Would you want someone with a log in their eye to take a tweezers to YOUR eye?)

What we ALL need... is New Eyes. We need integrity or wholeness or singularity (last week) in our vision. We need to see as God sees... to be complete, whole and holy like God is. On earth as it is in heaven!

God came into His world physically. He’s the infinite, eternal, unchangeable Spirit but He became physical in Jesus Christ. At some point in that process He wore diapers and was totally dependent of two peasants who parented Him. Accused of being conceived out of wedlock (John 8.19, 41).

All the people around Him, especially the religious folks, judged Him. He didn’t look like a god... He had no lightening bolts in His hands. He had “no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.” (Isa 53.2).

What kind of embarrassment IS this? What kind of scandal IS this (1 Cor 1.23)? And we... judged Him, this poor Man who had no place to lay His sacred Head...He was a homeless Person...and we're repulsed by and afraid of homeless persons. And even though He warned us saying, "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment." (John 7.24)

Still, we judged by appearance. He was not what we expected... not what the ancients expected. "He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. (John 1.10-11)

We judged Him...and all the while, HE WAS TAKING OUR JUDGMENT. The justice, the condemnation that my sins deserved fell on Him... We judged the Judge to death and by our clumsy hands, He removed the beam from my eye and was nailed to it. God the Father gave to Jesus Christ, what I deserved so that I could have what He deserves –

In judging others... in imposing a standard on others that I would NOT want imposed on ME... I am playing God; I am trying to do away with God the righteous judge – judging others is attempted "Deicide" Here's James CH 4: "There's *only* one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who's able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?" (12)

I'm trying to knock God from His throne and put myself in His place... BUT don't we see that, in reality, God took MY PLACE... In Jesus Christ, God took my judgment that I might be acquitted and that all the moral goodness and beauty Jesus exhibited is now attributed to me – He was charged with My crimes and I am credited with His righteousness... a moral perfection that surpasses that of the Scribes and Pharisees... and a pathway opened to me that is truly the good, full, complete life that God intends.

Now, what do we do with all this? How does seeing past the marred, broken, unimpressive appearance of Jesus Christ and embracing Him by faith save us from our judgmental tendencies? How do I use these New Eyes that see past appearance?

The art of Christian discernment is learned by seeing God's outrageous generosity. He invites us to ask, seek and knock (A-S-K)... He loves to give to the ones who depend on Him as children depend on their Father. That generous love that was extended to me will enable me to judge others generously.

Further, that generosity and the A-S-K invitation also apply to my need for discernment. "Father, I realize that my bad first impression of this person is based on surface appearance – give Me Your Spirit so I'll be filled with LOVE and DISCERNMENT (Luke's version - "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?")

Also, did you just hear what Jesus slipped in there? "If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts..." He knows that we're fallen and so our ability to discern and see past appearances is

messed up... He knows we see the tiny, splinter-size misdemeanors of others while we ignore the pole in our own eye! That's the natural way we live. And He calls us to a life of prayer and trust to get us past appearances.

The 6<sup>th</sup> verse (one commentator called the most difficult verse in the Sermon on the Mount) should be seen as the counterbalance to the first verse. It's NOT that we're afraid to call evil what it is.

The Gentiles were considered "swine and dogs" because they were oblivious to spiritual truth... AND there are people like that today. When they make it clear that they have NO ESTEEM for spiritual things – no sense of need to be covered in the Day of Judgment then we move on... but even then, we know that God can change people... He changed me.

Next, just ask yourself if you'd want to be judged at your worst. When you deal with others, A-S-K to see the worst thing you've ever done... and then think, "Is this person *THAT* bad?"

Next... and I THINK this is the biggest take-away from this whole passage: DEAL WITH YOUR STUFF. Do you have stuff? I do.

I mean live a life of ongoing repentance. 'Remember that series last Christmas of David's sin and his psalm of repentance? Repentance is NOT a one-time event but a pattern of spiritual respiration: breathing IN God's grace by faith and breathing out our sins in repentance...

If we don't live that way (WHICH is the path to JOY and deep change) our ability to help others will be severely hampered and even dangerous. David said, "Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit. *Then* I will teach transgressors Your ways, And sinners will be converted to You. (12-13)"

Imagine if a person really had a terrible accident and had a log thrust into his eye (gross, right?) but it'd require time and multiple surgeries... So live in the ongoing treatment that repentance really IS. Then you'll find a voice with sinners... some of whom may be seated next to you today.