

## Matthew 7:1-6 (NKJV)

<sup>1</sup> "Judge not, that you be not judged.

<sup>2</sup> For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.

<sup>3</sup> And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?

<sup>4</sup> 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?

<sup>5</sup> Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

<sup>6</sup> Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.

So, how did we do with worry this last week? Did we resolve to obey God and use the **anti-worry fuel** God has given to us?

If not, we might need to be tested until we pass that test. We might as well pass it on the next go round. Remember the worry machine never plows the garden. Don't buy another.

We are now moving to the next text in the beginning of chapter 7. And we are going to study judging.

Angie has probably been chomping at the bit to get to this study. It is one of her pet peeves how badly **Christians** and **non Christians alike** misapply this quote.

I am beginning to understand just how seldom the sermon on the mount is applied properly. It is quoted often but rarely applied correctly.

It is easy to read the sermon on the mount and when it moves to Chapter 7 we say, "Oh good. Jesus is completely changing the topic." But I think if we look at the whole context we will see that is not true.

Remember that all of what He said previously was describing a Christian living in the presence of God. Here He talks about living in the presence of God in relation **to other people**. What matters most is not what we think of others, nor what others think of us, but what **God thinks of all of us**. We need to always keep that in perspective in all of our dealings inside and outside of the church. That is the bigger context of our text.

You and I could come up with a long list of those things that are different between **believers and unbelievers**. And very high on the list, if we go by biblical references, is the different views that believers and non believers have regarding **this life**.

To most of our non believing associates, they think that this life is all there is. At least that is what **drives them**, even if they may have ideas of an afterlife. So they are continually living in such a way to **maximize** their temporary pleasure or **minimize** their temporary pain. But their lives are not lived with a predominant idea that a deity is watching on, and at the end of their lives they **must give account to God**. That is usually an afterthought. Many have a very wishful theory that they are good to go because God is pretty nice, or so they hear.

We believers are described as a **different animal**. We view this life as an introduction to life, not life itself. This life is a series of courses we go through to prepare us for the real thing. This isn't life, as much as it is school for life. So we are continually reorienting to that reality. It is a constant struggle, but one we are glad to be part of.

Now how much of our trouble comes by failing to do that?

Let's put it to an easy test.

If you knew **yesterday** that you were suddenly going to **die today** and the next thing you would know would be that you were in the presence of Christ, if you had known **that**, how much of **yesterday's** turmoil or **last week's** turmoil in your life, how much of that would have happened?

The important work you did would have still needed to be done. Your ministry to others needed to be done. While we may have skimmed on trying to exercise or lose weight, these may still be valid pursuits.

What am I trying to emphasize is that much of our **trouble** disappears when we **orient to eternity**. The squabbles we have with our spouses, our disappointments at work, our stress at work, our worries certainly... Eternity has a way of putting **all of those things** in a **different** perspective. We all know the right answer to the test question. Should we live with eternity in view? Yes. But will we do what it takes to **remind ourselves of this**? That is the **real** question.

And this morning Jesus is going to include judging in that bigger perspective as well. However it is, that we **should** or **should not** judge, it must **all be in the perspective** that **we live before God**. It must all be done in the light of a **real eternity** that we are **wildly** looking forward to.

And so we go to our text.

**1 "Judge not, that you be not judged.**

We need to be careful with this, just like the rest of the things Jesus said. We must take this in the **smaller** context of what **Jesus said** and in the **larger** context of what the **old testament says** and how the **disciples applied Jesus's sayings** in the epistles.

Now there are those today, and this is very vexing to Christians who enter into these conversations with these folks, who say this means you can never **evaluate another's behavior** by the Bible and **say it is wrong**. In fact any **negative light** you might cast on what that person says or does is considered **wrongful judging**. And out it comes. Jesus said "Judge not that you be not judged". At that point we are expected to throw up our hands in surrender because Jesus surely does say that. Battle over.

Odds are that most of us have already studied this because there is probably no Christian for whom this has not been an issue at some point.

What does Jesus mean when He says, **Judge not that you be not judged?**

Does he mean that you must never exhibit rational evaluation of a thing?

One of the definitions of the Greek word used here means

**to pronounce an opinion concerning right and wrong**

The broad definition of the word means to **discern the difference between things to determine what is morally inferior or superior**.

But just like our English word for judge, there are lots of other definitions.

And when that happens, the Greek dictionary isn't our greatest tool. At this point we must begin to work with the **smaller context** and the **greater context**.

Fortunately for us we can tell from this tiny context what Jesus cannot mean.

Look at verse

**6 Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.**

We are given a command but before we obey it we must know something.

Is this person like a dog or a swine? Are they unworthy of our attention, of our ministry to them.

Ok, that seems simple.

But let me ask you.

When you observe a person, how do you determine if that person is doglike or piglike? Is that not going to require a **good** or **bad** assessment? Will that not require discernment of a person who is **better** and a person who is **worse** in some specific area? Guess what that is called in the Greek? Judging.

So is Jesus saying never ever ever make any kind of moral discernment and within 6 verses He commands us to do **exactly the opposite**? That is impossible.

OK so even in the smallest context we can see that this is not what Jesus is talking about. He is not prohibiting all moral discernment. What He is prohibiting must be some different nuance, some other definition of the word Judge.

Now let's expand the context just a little.

Look at verse 15.

**Matthew 7:15-20 (NKJV)**

**15 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.**

**16 You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles?**

**17 Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.**

**18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor *can* a bad tree bear good fruit.**

**19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.**

**20 Therefore by their fruits you will know them.**

What exactly are we doing when we are discerning who a false prophet is and who a true teacher is? Is that anything but a **moral distinction** made between one person and another? Jesus is saying, just like you continually distinguish between grapes and figs from thornbushes and thistles, so we are to distinguish false teachers from true.

And remember what we know about wolves in sheep's clothing. They are working harder to look like a sheep than a sheep does. They are likely to outwardly portray all kinds of Christian virtues. They will listen to the right music and wear the right t-shirts. It will take **great attention** to make the discernment. It may take **obsessive attention to detail**.

Thinking that reveals this kind of truth about a person seems to be a **terrible crime**, maybe the greatest crime, in our **moral relativistic climate** where **I have my truth** and **you have your truth** and it does not matter if nothing makes sense. Where some think that If I **do not think something a sin**, then it **cannot be a sin** because I don't think it is. It is not a sin **for me**. Well there are issues of faith, things that some are free to do but others cannot, issues of conscience, but we are not talking about that. There are things that are universally wrong. Adultery is wrong. Greed is wrong. There are lots of objective sins.

Jesus did not teach we should never tell the truth about those things. He did not teach that we should not **judge** in that sense. He was not prohibiting proper discernment between **good** and **evil** or between **true** and **false**. He cannot be **saying it** and **unsaying it** at the same time. So this is exceedingly helpful for us.

If we fall into those “stop judging” conversations we can simply ask a person “what must a person do to determine true teachers from false teachers?”

Whatever that is is **not** the judging Jesus **prohibits**.

Let’s look at other places where this very same word is used.

### **Romans 14:5 (NKJV)**

<sup>5</sup> One person **esteems** *one* day above another; another **esteems** every day *alike*. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind.

The word for **esteems** here is the same word as judge, so we get an idea of its wide usage. A person discerns in his thinking that one day is to be dealt with differently than another. Another sees them all alike. The point is not that we should **never make estimations**. It is not like we should **stop judging** in that way. In fact the emphasis in this text was that we learn to live people who judge things differently than we do. So we see that this kind of judging is not condemned, drawing a difference between one thing and another.

### **Luke 7:43 (NKJV)**

<sup>43</sup> **Simon answered and said, "I suppose the *one* whom he forgave more." And He said to him, "You have rightly judged."**

Here Jesus is telling a Pharisee that he has judged rightly. The Pharisee was judging between the responses of two people. Judging here was a good thing.

### **Acts 15:19 (NKJV)**

<sup>19</sup> **Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God,**

Peter here is judging the best course of action. His judging is terribly useful and would never be prohibited.

### **1 Corinthians 11:13 (NKJV)**

<sup>13</sup> **Judge among yourselves. Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered?**

Here judging is prescribed. Judging between right and wrong must be done so the church does the right thing. It is the job of the elders, the responsibility and **requirement** of the elders, to judge in this way. This is **good** judging.

### **2 Corinthians 5:14 (NKJV)**

<sup>14</sup> **For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died;**

You can’t get any better judging than this. It is logical thinking that ends to true conclusions. We are supposed to think like that.

### **Acts 13:46 (NKJV)**

<sup>46</sup> **Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and**

## **judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.**

Here is an interesting use of the word judge. Paul and Barnabas judged that the audience he spoke to had **judged themselves** unworthy. They had revealed something about themselves by their decision making. Paul did not say the he judged them. He said that they judged themselves. He was just telling the truth about it.

This is often our best response when someone says we are judging someone. All we need to do is quote the scripture and say that they are judging themselves. We are just telling the truth about their state.

### **Acts 21:25 (NKJV)**

**<sup>25</sup> But concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have written *and* decided that they should observe no such thing, except that they should keep themselves from *things* offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality."**

The word for decided is the same word for judge. Deciding was used as a very spiritual process in the efforts of the apostles. They **had to** judge. They were responsible to judge. And if they had not judged they would have been negligent of their duties.

Leadership of any kind requires judging. It requires determining who is in the right and who is in the wrong. And it requires the continually **unpleasant exercise of righting** those wrongs and standing up for the those who are weak or those who are being wronged. The person who cannot judge cannot lead. And the person who will not exert his or her judgment is not fit to lead. OK, before we go into what Jesus **does mean** which, Lord willing, will be next week, let's look at how we **should** judge.

How we judge rightly

### **John 7:24 (NKJV)**

**<sup>24</sup> Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."**

Jesus was talking to people who were being critical of Him. He is compelling them to look at the evidence. They were receiving a mass of hogwash from the leaders of their time criticizing Jesus. And Jesus appeals to the crowd. What He is saying is, don't go by frivolous judging. Don't go by the judging of your feelings or intuitions or perceptions. Do the work of doing righteous judgment. Do deep judging. Do judging based on cognitive truth. In this case it would be judging that says, "Jesus just did a miracle. He healed on the Sabbath. Not one of them is quoting a scripture that says a person should do

no healing on the Sabbath. So there is not authority in their judgment. There is no truth. There is no scripture. Just a feeling.”

How many times have we made that mistake. We had a feeling something was wrong. Something did not feel right. So we reacted. We responded. And then we find out we are all wrong.

We **should judge**. That is for sure. But we should do it based on righteous judgment, judgment from truth, judgment from scripture.

### **1 Corinthians 11:31 (NKJV)**

**<sup>31</sup> For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.**

Is judging bad? Based on this verse the question seems almost funny? Do we like the discipline of God? Do we want the Lord to spank us? Do we want unnecessary pain due to choosing to sin? Well if so, good. Whatever you do, do not judge.

This quote is in the context of judging ourselves prior to communion. The primary focus is how we are treating the body members of Christ. And it is basically saying the best thing you can **possibly do for yourself** if you are carelessly treating the body of Christ is to **judge yourself properly**. And what does that consist of. It means telling the truth about your bad behavior or motives. And do something about it.

Judging is a massive good thing right here.

### **John 5:30 (NKJV)**

**<sup>30</sup> I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.**

Here Christ is speaking and is giving us the perfect criteria for proper judging. As I hear, I judge. Basically our judgment is not to be based on anything but that which God reveals. And for us that is scripture. We can hardly say judging is bad when the Son of God in the flesh did this kind of judging. He could not have said **never do this** and then **He did it** while in flesh. He even said He did not come to judge. But here He **does** judge. That helps us know that not all judging is alike.

### **James 2:12 (NKJV)**

**<sup>12</sup> So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty.**

Note here that the law of liberty, which is the preaching of the Gospel, will judge too. My point here is that there is judgment that **should be done**. If we do not do it, God will do it. So the more we do it, the better off we are.

### **Hebrews 13:4 (NKJV)**

**<sup>4</sup> Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.**

Ok so if we tell someone who is living in sexual sin or adultery and is not repentant, if we tell them they are in danger, how in the world could that possibly be a bad thing? It is not **we** who are judging. It is not **we** who are ascribing a verdict. We are just **telling the truth** about it.

This cannot possibly be the bad judging that Christ is talking about. We are not judging in a bad sense. We are warning of God's judgment in a very helpful sense

### **Romans 2:12 (NKJV)**

**<sup>12</sup> For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law**

Here is the real crux of the matter. **What** does the judging? If you see me embezzling from my company and you tell me that I am doing something evil that will bring about God's judgment if I do not repent, are you **judging me**? Yes. In a good sense you are judging that my behavior is evil and will invite God's punishment. But in another sense you are not condemning me. God's **law** is condemning me. The verdict is not in yet. I may still repent. So **I** may not be condemned. But the behavior I am committing **IS already condemned**. And it is not condemned by me. I am just reading what is written. The condemnation is from God.

### **2 Thessalonians 2:12 (NKJV)**

**<sup>12</sup> that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.**

Here the word for judged is translated as condemned. Everyone who does not believe Christ but lives for pleasure is condemned. Would Christ **stop us** before we approach that person ready to say to that person, "I am concerned for your soul. Because if you do not repent you will be eternally lost." Would He say, you must not say that. Would Christ say, "that would be judging them. Do not judge lest you be condemned." That is even absurd to think about. He **commands us** to to that sort of thing. He certainly would not **condemn** it.

I know it is rare that we spend a whole sermon on what Christ **does not mean** by what He says. I feel a little like a liberal theologian when I do such a thing. But I think the **moral relativism** of our day demands such an approach. You and I must be exceedingly good at judging in the way scripture commands us to be. And we have got to have fuel for our arguments when the world, inside or outside of the church, tells us we need to **stop thinking critically**, we need to **stop proclaiming truth**. We need to tell them that if they want to quote Jesus it would do them eternal good to **study Jesus**. Because what they are saying does not represent what Jesus is saying. Jesus wants us to see the



whole world based on what the **word of God says**. He wants us to **discern** in this way. He wants us to **judge** in this way. And **not judging** by this way leads to eternal lostness, not some wonderful world where no one knows anything. Yes we can tell what is right and what is wrong. That is not the kind of judging Christ forbade. That is the kind of judging scripture **commands**. Even **Christ** commanded it. So next week we will look at what kind of judging it is that Christ forbids, Lord willing.