

One of the seminary professors... who I felt very fortunate to have... was Don Sunukjian. I (and many others) think Don Sunukjian is a brilliant preacher. This morning, I would like to introduce our passage by quoting from one of his sermons. He titled his message, "With The Eyes of A Doctor."

Let's suppose that on your way to work each morning, you usually stop at a Starbucks. You tend to get to the store at the same time each morning, and you usually see a young girl who gets there about the same time you do. On many mornings you find yourselves standing next to each other in line. In fact, you both order the same thing—double espresso with skim milk.

She seems to be into the gothic culture—black hair, black clothes, knee-high jackboots, black fingernails, black lipstick, piercings in the nose, lips, ears, and eyebrows, and scattered tattoos. She usually has a backpack that she has to take off to get her money, and sometimes it seems hard for her to hold the backpack, get the money, and pay for the coffee all at the same time.

She doesn't make too much eye contact with others. You wonder whether you should strike up a conversation with her—maybe offer to hold her backpack while she pays. You're not sure what to do with the whole gothic bit, and you don't know whether she'd give you a dark look and not say anything.

Should you try to be friendly? Maybe find out what brings you both to the same Starbucks each morning? See if she ever tries any of the other specialty coffees? Move toward greeting her each morning? Learn about other parts of her life? Yes! By all means! Move into her world. Make a comment one day about how the barista probably already knows both of your orders as soon as you walk in the door. Offer to hold her backpack while she pays. A couple of days later, tell her your name and ask for hers. If she misses a few days, tell her you hope she wasn't sick the next time you see her.

Why move into her world? Because with the eyes of a doctor, you see a hurt that God can heal. You see an anger and alienation.

Maybe it's because of sexual abuse from a stepfather, a brother, or an old boyfriend. But you see the heaviness, the sadness. With the eyes of a doctor, you see a hurt that God can heal.

There's a man at work that everybody shakes their head at. He's been divorced a couple of times, and both of his ex-wives are suing him for past child support. He's a deadbeat dad—way behind on his support, sending them just a little bit, every so often. He's been living with another woman and her small child, but a couple of weeks ago, he slapped her around pretty hard. She called the cops, he spent a couple nights in jail, and she kicked him out and now has a restraining order against him. He's currently living in one of the cheap motels that rents by the month.

Every day at lunch, he goes out by himself to get a hamburger or a burrito, always coming back with mustard or chili on his shirt. Nobody talks very much to him, because he's too quick to complain about how everybody's taking advantage of him, everybody's pushing his buttons, everybody's squeezing him dry. Who wants to listen to that?

You've often wondered about being nice and offering to go to lunch with him. You like the same fast food he does—Burger King and Taco Bell and Subway. And you know Subway has a sale going on—three foot-long sandwiches for \$10. You couldn't possibly eat that much, but it seems like a shame not to take advantage of such a bargain.

Should you invite him along one day? Yes! By all means! Move into his world. Go to lunch with him. When you get to Subway and you both sit down with your sandwiches and chips and drinks, ask him if he's watched any of the baseball playoffs. Who's he rooting for in the World Series? Mention that it's been just about the worst umpiring you've ever seen.

Why move into his world? Because with the eyes of a doctor, you see a hurt that God can heal. You see a bitterness at life, failing at relationships, blaming others instead of knowing how to change himself. You sense his fear of the future—no money, a criminal record on the books—and his desperation over being all alone in the world. With the eyes of a doctor, you see a hurt that God can heal.

Your company has a co-ed softball team that competes in the city league, and they're looking for a couple of extra players. You like softball. You like the feel of connecting on a pitch, running down a fly ball, making a clothesline throw on one hop to home plate to nail a runner trying to score. The first game is next Tuesday, and they're pushing you to join them.

But you're not sure. You like softball, but you don't know about playing with the people in the office. You went to a company picnic a couple of months ago, where there was a pickup softball game, and some of the guys were drinking a lot of beer, getting pretty raunchy in their comments about some of the women on the other team. Some of the wives of your coworkers were loud-mouthed, and they flirted with other husbands. The parents yelled mean things at their children but did nothing to control them. And in the parking lot, one of the married men from the office who had come to the picnic by himself was behind his pickup truck going at it pretty heavy with one of the single moms in the office. Do you want to deal with all that every week? Should you join the team? Yes! By all means! Move into their world. Get to the park, shag those balls, and run those bases. Bring some Cokes to put in with their beers. When one of the women on the other team lines it into a gap between center and left for a stand-up double, instead of questioning her sexual preference, shout out, "Great hit! Did you play in college?" Buy a cheap glove for the single mom's kid, ask if he wants to be batboy, have him sit beside you on the bench, and teach him the strategies of the game.

Why move into their world? Because with the eyes of a doctor, you see their hurts that God can heal. You see that the machismo and the raunchiness merely disguise insecurity and failure. You see marriages where there's no love and children that don't have the security of boundaries. You see the single mom's loneliness and vulnerability that puts her at risk of being deeply hurt. With the eyes of a doctor, you see the hurts that God can heal.

In life we can have the eyes of a judge or we can have the eyes of a doctor. The eyes of a judge see a gothic girl, a deadbeat dad, and a foul-mouthed team, leave us thinking, Why have anything to do with them? The eyes of a doctor see the hurts that God can heal.

Wow! That is convicting... isn't it? ... Whatever you sow – you shall also reap.

This morning... as we continue our study through Matthew... we will resume our examination of Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount." The Lord has been explaining His startling statement (that He made at the beginning of His message):

**Matthew 5:20 (ESV)**

*For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.*

Today we will see that a member of the Kingdom of God has a righteousness that does not judge others... like the Scribes and Pharisees did.

But let me say... before we begin in our passage... that Jesus did not forbid us to judge others. ... (No)... Careful discrimination is essential in the Christian life. ... (You see)... Christian love must never be blind.

**Philippians 1:9-10 (ESV)**

*And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ,*

The person who believes all that he hears... and accepts everyone who claims to be spiritual... will be in a heap of a whole lot of trouble. He/she will experience confusion and great spiritual loss.

Now... our opening verse seems to say... "don't judge others..." But if we simply accept everyone and everything... without any judgment... we are left extremely vulnerable. We will not be acting in the way Paul prayed for his fellow believers to behave... "Love others with discernment."

Thankfully... our passage today provides us with a balance... how to love others – but be discerning. ... So far in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount... He has been addressing the manner in which disciples should live life... as devoted subjects... in the kingdom of God.

At the opening of Matthew chapter seven... He continues the sermon... but the emphasis shifts to instructions on how His disciples should live with one another. "How to love others... but be discerning..." is part of that instruction. ... And one concept that will stand out is this: before we judge others... we must judge ourselves... because what you sow... you shall also reap.

### **Matthew 7:1**

By this point in the sermon... probably none of us... who have been taking Jesus' words seriously... would feel much like judging anyone else anyway. Still... we are human... and our flesh tends to prefer applying ethics to other people... rather than ourselves. (For example, husbands tend to prefer quoting Paul's instructions in Ephesians 5 to their wives... "wives must submit to their husbands..." rather than Paul's admonitions to them... just a few verses later... "Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church..." (in other words sacrifice even your own life for her!) ... Likewise... I have (and maybe you have too)... sometimes listened to a sermon thinking... *I wish so-and-so had shown up for church today.* ... So Jesus renders the point that He wants to make sure that we get - in these opening verses of Matthew 7.

The counsel here deals with prejudice in judging. It is judgment that is often intentionally and inexcusably faulty.

The Greek word (krino) translated as *judge*... is difficult to appraise... because... like many English words... it has a wide range of meanings depending on the context. ... krino is used 114 times in the New Testament. It gets translated as "judge" eighty-eight times... "determine" seven times... "condemn" five times... "go to law" twice... "call in question" twice... and "esteem" twice... ... And then... it gets translated in other ways... eight times. ... Krino is a generic word to which we can apply both negative... and positive meanings. ... Therefore... we should approach our interpretation of this passage with careful discernment... relying on the context of its surrounding verses.

Is Jesus saying that a believer should never judge another person? ... The answer is both yes and no. ... There are numerous passages in which we are commanded to rebuke and admonish one another... (For example we have 1 Tim 5:20)...

***1 Timothy 5:20 (ESV)***

*As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear.*

We must be able to determine (by understanding God's Word) whether or not a fellow Christian has overstepped the bounds of acceptable behavior. However... the authority for the ultimate judgment of a person's position before the Lord... is reserved for the Lord alone... and He shares this authority with no one.

Clearly Jesus is not saying here that we never judge... that we never point out sin in our brothers and sisters... or that we never receive correction from others. ... In fact... He goes on to indicate (in our very passage here in Matthew 7)... that this is exactly what we ought to be doing!

Many unbelievers... of course... will use this text... and throw it in our faces... that we are not to call such things as homosexuality a sin... or that we should not warn someone who professes to be a believer of the consequences of having sex outside of marriage. ... Interestingly... when they attack us and say we cannot do this... they condemn themselves... for they are doing the very thing they say we should not do.

But looking at this generic Greek word (krino)... and how it is used here... (observing the context of the surrounding verses... as well as other passages of Scripture)... “krino” here is an expressed warning to us... against coming to adverse conclusions about people... in a condemning way. He is warning us not to foster a critical spirit toward others.... Looking down on them with disdain... or a faulty superiority.

This matter of harsh judgment is certainly something about which we need to be very careful. (There needs to be restraint.) ... Although Jesus makes it clear that we are not to sit in harsh judgment upon another... He also said (just a few verses later in verse 16)... look at it with me...

### **Matthew 7:15-16**

...By their fruits we will know who is a false prophet. ... So Jesus is not saying in verse 1 that we must not to be discerning. Verse one does not use “krino” to mean discernment. Judgment (in verse 1) and discernment

are two different things. ... A theology professor put it in this rather unique fashion, "*I am no judge, but I am a fruit inspector.*"

### **Matthew 7:2**

Indeed, we should approach our urge to judge someone else with extreme caution. ... Jesus advised that the way in which we judge others will come back on us... and we will be judged by the standards we have imposed on others. ... We are not to render a verdict based upon prejudiced information. ... Nor are we to use ourselves as the standard of judgment. ... If we were judged in eternity merely on the basis of the verbal judgments we have rendered others... we would all be in a heap of trouble. ... We've condemned ourselves!

If you judge prejudicially, you can expect to experience the same. There is a built-in reciprocation of our actions.

### **Galatians 6:7 (ESV)**

*Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.*

So we often experience judgment for our sin in the same coin in which we sin. ... Not only will God judge us at the end... but people are also judging us right now... and we receive from people exactly what we give. ...The kind of judgment... and the measure of judgment... comes right back to us. (We reap what we have sown.)

To strengthen his point, Jesus used the literary device of hyperbole. He posed an analogy of exaggeration to illustrate how presumptuous it is to



judge another person's actions or intentions based on one's own personal standards.

### **Matthew 7:3-5**

The "log" is the spirit of criticism and prejudice. With that blocking your vision, you are in no position to judge the little sin of another. ... Jesus warns us that the beam in our own eye... would obstruct our vision to the point that all of our judgments would be suspect. ... Indeed... it would be ridiculous to exalt ourselves as judge... (criticizing others)... while we are so flawed ourselves. ... How can we presume to help our brother... when our own sins ensnare us?

Jesus tells us to examine our own motives and conduct... instead of judging others. The traits that bother us in others... are often the habits we have ourselves. ... Our bad habits and behavior patterns... are the very ones that we most want to change - *in others*.

Do you find it easy to magnify others' faults... while excusing your own? ... If you are ready to criticize someone... check FIRST to see if you deserve the same criticism. ... Judge yourself first... and then lovingly forgive and help your neighbor.

And here is something else... that we must FIRST contend with: We can never genuinely recognize... (much less *remove*)... the log in our own eye – by ourselves. Only Christ can.

Under the umbrella of His matchless grace... He will cause us to see our own fault... and that we can be forgiven... in order to do His kingdom work

in others. Only when we have put the search-light of Christ over our own life... and had Jesus remove the beam from our eyes... can see our fellow believers as our Lord sees them... and stretch out a helping hand to guide them across the chasm of sin... into a right relationship in the kingdom of heaven.

The bottom line is this: There should be something different about the lives of Jesus' disciples. ... Life in the kingdom... will look different from life in the world.

The purpose of self-judgment is to prepare us to serve others. Christians are obligated to help each other grow in grace. ... When we do not judge ourselves... we not only hurt ourselves... but we also hurt those to whom we could minister. ... The Pharisees judged and criticized *others* to make themselves look good. ... But Christians should judge *themselves* so that they can help others look good. ... This is why I used the excerpt from Don Sunukjian's sermon "With the Eyes of a Doctor..."

With the eyes of a doctor... we will want to reach out to help others. However... (and this is huge)... we have to determine who are "dogs"... and who are "pigs"... We are not to offer our spiritual treasures to them.

### **Matthew 7:6**

Pigs typically ate the vilest foods... and Jesus' original audience did not love dogs (like I do). They saw dogs as scavengers... consuming even human blood. ... Stray dogs were known to growl at those who tossed them food... as well as those who ignored them.

We saw a lot of these type of dogs when we were in Indonesia. They looked like the dogs you see around here... except they were scrawny and mangy... and very detached (not personable or having any loyal bonds with humans.) They had an empty stare (a hallow... far-away look) in their eyes. They roamed the streets... and no one seemed to pay much attention to them... except to shoo them away. They did not seem to serve any purpose – even as pets. The image that Christ used for this type of purposeless dog... would thus be forceful and beyond dispute for His ancient hearers.

But... hold on! Isn't it true that we must carry the Gospel "to every creature" ...?

**Mark 16:15 (ESV)**

*And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.*

Go into all the world and proclaim the Gospel to everyone... but do not cheapen the Gospel by a ministry that lacks discernment. ... Once you encounter someone who is hostile and demeaning to Jesus Christ and His followers... we are instructed NOT to continue investing our spiritual values with them.

Even Jesus refused to talk to Herod (Luke 23:9)... and Paul refused to argue with people who resisted the Word (Acts 13:44-49). ... It is a wise Christian who first assesses the condition of a person's heart before sharing the precious pearls.

Here we are seeing that Jesus charged His disciples to **USE** judgment. ... Daily... we encounter people who do not look at the world and its

circumstances through the same lens that the disciple of Christ does. ... We are making our way through a world that is often violently opposed to the Lord and His ways. By inviting them to participate with us in the Kingdom of God... they will trample God's Word and us... under their feet.

It is futile to try to teach holy concepts to people who don't want to listen and will only tear apart what we say. We should not stop giving God's Word to unbelievers... but we should be wise and discerning in our witnessing... so that we will not be wasting our time.

But wait a minute... haven't we all heard testimonies from a former "pig," or a former "dog" (someone who had been violently hostile to the Gospel)... but because of a believer's persistence... they finally came around...? It happens all the time... doesn't it...? ... I may be speaking to some former "pigs" and "dogs." ... So what is Jesus telling us to do... or not to do...? ... On the basis of Matthew 7:6... have our missionaries (like Keith and Anita Miles... who brought the Gospel to the hostile tribe of Tugutil people in Indonesia)... been disobedient to Christ...? Is Mottel Baelston... our missionary to the often VERY hostile Jewish community on the East Coast... trying to give what is holy to dogs... or casting pearls before swine...?

How do we apply Matthew 7:6 in a practical way...? Is it sometimes OK to cast our pearls before swine...? If someone shows ANY resistance at all to your witnessing attempts – should you... as a matter of obedience to this verse here in Matthew... back off immediately... and never try again...?

While the very next verse here in Matthew chapter seven... has left many people thinking it is randomly placed... it is not. Jesus has been discussing

judging others... and then suddenly... out of the blue... He starts to discuss PRAYER.

But oh how perfectly placed this next verse is! It is as if Jesus knew that we might be confused. "Take the Gospel to everyone... but no... wait... there are some people who you should not continue giving it to..." How do we know...? We need wisdom! Where do we get such wisdom...? (Now we are ready for verse 7...)

### **Matthew 7:7**

How to meet the people of this world is the greatest problem facing a child of God. Every day we rub shoulders with princes and paupers, gentlemen and scoundrels, true and false professors. Some folk need our friendship and help, and we need them, and we ought to pull them to our hearts. Others are rascals and will destroy us, and we need to push them from us. How are we to know? To ask, seek, and knock definitely refers to this problem. These verses can be used for other situations also, but it is this situation that they have primary reference to. You and I are human and fallible; we make mistakes. Only God can judge perfectly. Therefore, we must pray and seek His wisdom and direction. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God" (James 1:5).

When you meet new friends, do you ever ask God to make it clear to you how to treat them? I have found out that it is a good idea to do this.

When we despair of ever achieving the slightest advantage over our sinful tendency to fail at achieving these principles, Jesus shows us that the answer is found only in Him. He does not leave us to our own devices as

we seek to solve the dilemma that so captivates our souls. Instead, Jesus instructs His followers that they must continually ask, seek, and find the answers that will enable them to live as true subjects of their King.

In fact... Jesus assures his disciples that continued knocking would result in the door to the kingdom being opened to them. They will find that the Spirit of the living God lives within them, equipping them for the work of the kingdom.

But let's be careful... Matthew 7:7 is not His suggestion or His kind advice. These are the commands of the King... given to his people. ... If we... as disciples of Jesus Christ... ever hope to achieve the objectives of the kingdom... it is absolutely imperative that we maintain a constant... perpetual search for the concerns and directives of our Lord.

**Ask.** Disciples should come to God in humility and conscious of need. **Seek** connects one's prayer with responsible action in pursuing the will of God. **Knock** suggests perseverance. Disciples are to persist in prayer, confident that their Father will provide whatever is best for them, according to His sovereign, gracious will.

The whole point of the next several verses is to assure us that God wants us to ask... seek... and knock... and that He wants to provide us with His best answers.... Our persistent search for God's will... results in an UNambiguous answer!

### **Matthew 7:8-11**

Christ is showing us the heart of God the Father. God is not selfish... begrudging... or stingy... and we don't have to beg or grovel as we come with our requests. ... He is a loving Father... Who understands... cares... and comforts. ... If humans can be kind... imagine how kind God... the Creator of kindness... can be.

And now we come to a very familiar verse – but it is hardly ever presented in the context... of which Jesus gave it. We have come to what is called “the Golden Rule”... and I want you to first focus for a moment... only on the very first word in the verse. “So...”

“So” is perhaps the most important word in this verse. It relates the Golden Rule to that which precedes it – prayer! It all comes in one package. We need discernment in who we should give spiritual help to... and that discernment comes through prayer... and only as we “ask... seek... and knock”... are we able to apply the Golden Rule.

Listen to what Warren Wiersbe has written about Matthew 7:12...

*This is the so-called "Golden Rule," one of the most misunderstood statements in the Bible. This statement is not the sum total of Christian truth, nor is it God's plan of redemption. We should no more build our theology on the Golden Rule than we should build our astronomy on "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star."*

*This great truth is a principle that ought to govern our attitudes toward others. It only applies to believers, and it must be practiced in every area of life. The person who practices the Golden Rule refuses to say or do anything that would harm himself or others. If our judging of others is not governed by this principle, we will become proud and critical, and our own spiritual character will degenerate.*

*Practicing the Golden Rule releases the love of God in our lives and enables us to help others, even those who want to hurt us.*

*But remember that practicing the Golden Rule means paying a price. If we want God's best for ourselves and others, but others resist God's will, then they will oppose us. We are salt, and salt stings the open wound. We are light, and light exposes dirt.*

Christians need to judge properly... in order to practice the golden rule... remembering that whatever we sow... we shall also reap.

2006 started off as a bad year for Charles Moore. He lost his job as a roofer in Toledo, Ohio, and decided to return to his hometown of Detroit in search of work. Things progressed slowly, however, and Moore soon found himself living on the street. Then, in July, he stumbled upon 31 U.S. Savings Bonds in a city trash bin while searching for empty bottles to return for deposit money.

Amazingly, Moore tracked down the family of the bonds' owner with the help of a local nonprofit group called the Neighborhood Service Organization. The bonds had originally been purchased by Ernest Lehto during the 1980s at a face value of \$8,900. Having matured, they were worth \$20,738.88 when Moore found them. Ernest had passed away in 2004, but Moore returned the bonds to his son, Neil Lehto. For his honesty and effort, Moore was given \$100. "I was thankful for it," he said.

When local media picked up the story, however, Neil Lehto began receiving scores of vitriolic phone calls and e-mails from angry community members decrying him as cheap and ungrateful. Lehto, a lawyer, blamed his 82-year-old mother, saying that she was the sole beneficiary and had determined



the reward amount. "That generation of people would consider \$100 as an adequate reward," he said.

Thankfully, the community did more than express frustration toward Lehto; it also began to support Charles Moore. One man sent him eight trash-bags filled with bottle returns and a bowl of coins. Jesse Nyikon, a local billiards owner, offered Moore a night on the town complete with food, drinks, and unlimited pool. "He can be my guest," Nyikon said. "He did the right thing."

As the story began to grow, so did the number of people expressing gratitude for Moore's integrity. Dick Wolski and Ken Zorn—two businessmen from Troy, Michigan—pulled together a gift of \$1,200. They also paid for \$250 worth of clothing for Moore at Men's Warehouse. Best of all, they lined him up with a job interview at a local cleaning company.

"Here's a man who by all rights should be worried and thinking about himself, but who takes the time to think about others," Wolski said. "What a lesson. Isn't that what we're all supposed to be doing?"

My response is that Christians definitely need to practice the Golden Rule.

**Galatians 6:7 (ESV)**

*Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.*