

“Judging & The Good Life” Matthew 7:1-12 Shane Hatfield 7/17/22

Turn in your Bibles to Matthew 7. We are going to continue our study of the Sermon on the Mount, and we’re going to talk about everyone’s favorite topic this morning, the topic of judging. If you’ve been clamoring for a judging sermon, here it is! I don’t know that I’ve been clamoring to preach one but, preaching exegetically you get to these passages. As we come to the end of the Sermon on the Mount and we read this passage, it’s going to seem like these four little sections here are disconnected. So, as I was looking at this this week, I was thinking, ‘How are these four passages connected to each other and connected to the rest of the Sermon on the Mount?’ Well, I think it’s helpful to think about the Sermon on the Mount maybe like a paper or an essay. You have the introduction, that is the first part with the beatitudes, talking about us being the salt and light, it introduces the kingdom of God and its purposes and its nature. Then you have the body of the paper which is all of this huge middle section where Jesus describes the righteous character and the righteous practices of the kingdom of God, and these practices and this character are intertwined as you go through these passages. I think we can understand these four little sections in light of that. Jesus is talking about the righteous practices and the righteous character of the kingdom. Then there’s a closing part about how we enter the kingdom or how we respond to the kingdom, which we’ll look at next week.

So, with that as an introduction, let’s read Matthew 7:1-12. Hear the word of the Lord:

1 Judge not, that you be not judged. **2** For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. **3** 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? **4** 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? **5** 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.

6 “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.

7 “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. **8** For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. **9** Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? **10** Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? **11** If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

12 “So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”

This is the reading of God’s word. As Charlie read earlier, it is more precious than gold, than much fine gold. So, let’s listen to it together.

I am nursing a weak voice, I’ve been a little under the weather. Charlie, would you grab me a water bottle and bring it to me? I’m not sure I’m going to make it without it. This week as I

was studying, one of the commentators I was using was James Montgomery Boice, and he tells of a time in the 190s when he went to Europe to visit a friend and they were staying right along the Rhine river, a major river in Europe that runs along the border of France and through Germany. I didn't know that before this, I had to look that up. If you didn't know it either, then that's okay. So, it runs up there and he's staying right next to the Rhine river and there's a lock there. A lock is a system of levies and channels that can move water, also didn't exactly know what that was and had to look it up, but on this particular day the lock had a section of it that was supposed to divert water from the Rhine river into France. But as he looked down at the lock, he realized that someone had placed beams in the lock that had blocked off the water. So now, the water was not running from the Rhine river into France, that life-giving water was not coming into the flat lands and delivering water to it, it was only a trickle. All the water was heading north to Germany.

He says that in this passage Jesus is talking about a beam in our hearts that can block the flow of God's love from us to others. That beam is the sin of judgmentalism. Now, God in His infinite wisdom gave us the ability to discern between good and evil, right and wrong, safety and danger, so discernment is a good thing! The problem is we all have sin in our hearts that takes that discernment and uses it as a weapon against others. We all have a little Pharisee that lives in our hearts and looks at people and judges people that do and say and think and act differently than us. Not in a way to build them up, or a way that brings safety or salvation, but in a way that brings condemnation. So, as we look at Jesus' teaching and we talk about judgment, what I want you to see this morning is that Jesus is the great Physician that can remove those beams from our hearts that are blocking the flow of God's love from our hearts into others. He can remove that beam so that we can experience more of His love, and so others can experience more of His love as well. So, we're going to look at three things in this passage. We're going to see that Jesus teaches us how to judge carefully, judge prayerfully, and judge lovingly. Kids, as you're listening you might write down a time when you have unfairly judged someone, then afterwards talk to your parents about a better way to handle that!

First, we see that Jesus teaches us to judge carefully. Verse 1 presents us with an immediate challenge in this passage. Jesus says, "Judge not that you be not judged." So, on the surface, it looks like Jesus is forbidding all judgment whatsoever. But then, that can't be true because in verse 6 Jesus tells us to make a judgment about dogs and pigs and pearls and we'll talk about that in a little bit. Then, the whole Sermon on the Mount that we've been studying kind of presupposes that you make a judgment, that the kingdom of God that Jesus is presenting is different and better and healthier than the kingdom of this world. And as you read through all of Scripture, you see that God is teaching us how to use our wisdom and our discernment in a good and godly way. So, Jesus cannot be saying that there is no room for judgment in our lives ever at any point in time. Jesus is not warning us against using discernment, but He's warning us against having a judgmental and critical spirit. This word 'judge' here can mean to judge judiciously, it can mean to use wisdom and discernment, and it can be used to mean judgmentalism. I think what Jesus is warning us against here is having a judgmental spirit, and you see that in verses 3 and 4.

He's a good preacher, maybe the best preacher that ever lived, and so, He gives an illustration here of what it looks like to be judgmental. He says, "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?" So, what He's saying is someone with a judgmental spirit ignores the big sin in their life, and points out the small sins in everybody else's lives, right?

He's talking about a child who complains about their sibling not cleaning their room, but doesn't see anything wrong with hitting their sibling. He's talking about maybe a spouse that complains that the other spouse doesn't take out the trash, but at the same time doesn't see anything wrong with misusing the family's money. He might be talking about a coworker who is complaining about a lazy coworker but refuses to acknowledge that their overworking is taking time away from their friends and their family members. He's saying that we can't ignore the big sin in our lives, and point out the small, little sins in everybody else's lives. A judgmental spirit also confronts others about their sin, but refuses to acknowledge their own sin, right? A child may correct their parents for being controlling, but not offer any apology for mismanaging mom and dad's money. One spouse may resent another spouse for not being intimate, but then refuses to apologize for their hurtful words that cut off intimacy. One roommate may complain that another roommate is borrowing food all the time, but then she fails to acknowledge that she gossips and slanders about her roommate not taking out the trash. A judgmental spirit confronts others about their sin, but refuses to repent of their own sins. This judgmental spirit is hurtful to people!

It's almost comical. I kind of think Jesus uses this illustration as an example of just how ridiculous it is. Think about it, imagine eye surgery, I'm not an eye surgeon, I don't know if we have any eye surgeons here, but an eye is probably the most delicate part of the body. You have to be very careful to do eye surgery, I would imagine. Now imagine you sat down for eye surgery and the doctor that sat down to do your eye surgery had a gigantic log in their eye, their eyes were covered, or maybe they only had one eye! What kind of eye surgery do you think they would be able to do with bad eyesight! Probably really bad eye surgery! That's probably not the doctor that you want operating on your eyes, right? I think Jesus is saying, how could you possibly be in a position to carefully help your brother and sister with sin when you've got this gigantic log in your eye! You can't see! You're going to hurt them! Judgmentalism is hurtful, and it's hypocritical. A judgmental person pretends to care about holiness in other people's lives, but they don't. A judgmental person pretends to care about this other person, but they really only care about their own self-righteousness.

Jesus says in verse 2, "For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you." Now, what Jesus is not saying is that we should go, okay, I don't want to be judged a lot, so I'm not going to judge a lot. I just want Jesus to judge me a little, so I'm just going to judge a little. This isn't the ancient equivalent of 'You do you. I'll do me, and you do you.' What Jesus is saying is the very nature of judgmentalism brings judgment on us. When we stand before the throne in judgment, we are going to be judged for our sin of judgmentalism. What Jesus is trying to do is bring His good news and rescue us from that so we can judge carefully. He wants to see us repent of our judgmental spirit. So, to judge

carefully, we need to practice regular repentance. Specks do not become logs overnight. They grow into logs over years. So, just as when you became a Christian you admitted you were a sinner and you asked God to save you, and you repented for specific sins, you continue to do that in the life of a Christian. Faith and repentance in Jesus is the normal practice of a Christian and it's the way that we take those specks out so that they don't grow and become logs.

It's the only way we can actually help people. Galatians 6:1 teaches us that if we catch someone in a sin that we should restore them gently. That word, restoration, comes in the context of medicine; it's used to describe a bone that's been broken and reset. So, if you see your brother or your sister and they're broken by sin, the only way you can reset that bone properly is to have good eyesight, and the only way you can have good eyesight is to repent and believe the gospel continuously. Jesus teaches us to pray carefully so the healing waters of the gospel can flow out of our lives into the lives of others and they can experience His healing love. So, that's the first thing we see. We need to judge carefully.

The second thing we see is that we need to judge prayerfully. So, we covered the section on prayer whenever we talked about prayer several Sundays ago. I just want to give you a brief reminder of what it's talking about. The verbs here, ask, seek, knock, all describe this present, active, persistent prayer life. He's saying that we come to God in prayer, we ask for what we need, we seek for what we don't have, we knock for what we want to find, right? We have this good God and Father who will give us good gifts when we ask, who will help us find whenever we seek, and who will open the door when we knock. What this prayer does is it puts us in the position of a beggar, of someone who needs God's grace. When you think about a person with a judgmental spirit, do you think about a beggar? Do you think of a gracious person? No! You think about a prideful, arrogant person who has elevated themselves over somebody else. This prayer that Jesus is teaching us puts us in the position of a beggar. If we ask God to take away our judgmental spirit, He will take it away and give us a spirit of humility and compassion and kindness. If we seek to be a vessel for God's healing, love and restoration, and we ask for that, He's going to answer! He's going to give us what we need to be helpful. If we ask God for a clearer vision of righteousness, He's going to show us what it looks like. All of these promises are prayers for a judgmental person.

Now, that brings us to verse 6. This prayer is also a prayer for those who want to judge carefully, right? So, we look at verse 6 and Jesus says these words, "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." So, what is Jesus talking about? Dogs in the ancient near east were not domesticated nice animals, they were scavengers that roamed all over the city. They were unclean. So, if you gave something to them, they would make it unclean. They would make it unholy. Pigs were like wild boars. Again, this wasn't Charlotte's Web with this cute little pig in a pen, right? These were wild animals on the streets. If you came to a pig or a dog with pearls, they wouldn't know what to do with it! Pearls are beautiful. Pearls are valuable. Pearls are not useful for anything! So, the dog would defile the pearls, and the pig wouldn't know what to do with the pearls, they can't eat the pearls, so they would just trample them and they would come and attack you. So, in general what Jesus is saying, I think, is that there is an appropriate time and place and way to see people and help them. You've got to be discerning about how you

help people and what that looks like, what process you go through and what you talk to them about.

More specifically, most people think that the pearls here represent the kingdom of God. Jesus compares the kingdom of God to a pearl later on in Matthew. They apply that and say, what Jesus is saying is, there is a wrong way and a right way to share the truths of the kingdom. The truths of the kingdom are precious and valuable, and you've got to be wise and discerning about how you share them. It might be harmful to others and it might be harmful to you. Jesus calls us to spread the truth of the gospel far and wide to as many people as would receive it. But along the way, there may be some people who reject it, who turn on us, and who are angry and violent. In those situations, I think Jesus is calling us to use discernment, to move on, and to say, this is not the best way to love this person, or myself.

We see this pattern in the life of Jesus. Jesus sends His disciples out to evangelize to the lost sheep of Israel, but He said, if anyone rejects you, shake the sand off your sandals and leave! In the book of Acts, the apostles move out and they share the gospel to the ends of the earth, but you see several times through the book of Acts where their message is rejected and they leave and they move on to the next town. Even Jesus goes to some cities and it says He couldn't do many miracles there because of their lack of faith, and He moves on to another town. I think Jesus is saying that we have the good, valuable, precious truths of the kingdom and we need to be wise and discerning, gracious, and patient, and loving, about how we share them, in a way that's helpful for others and safe for ourselves. In those events, when we do have to turn away, it might even be our turning away and our character in that moment that actually shares the gospel with them. Someone might see the way that we have loved them with kindness and respect and gentleness, and it might be our kindness that would lead them to repentance.

D.A. Carson is a pastor that I read this week, and he talks about going to a conference and doing preaching and teaching on the gospel. There was a young man there who was a medical student. This man was very bright and intelligent and he came to faith in Christ, and he asked him, 'What was it that brought you to faith in Christ?' And he said, 'Well, when I was in medical school, there were people who were answering my intellectual questions about the gospel, but that wasn't necessarily what converted me. What converted me was their character.' It was watching the quality of their lives and the way they treated him that actually brought him to faith in Christ. So, we ask, we seek, we knock, and that puts us in a place of humility where the Holy Spirit can lead us to walk out in judgment in a way that's loving, and kind, and gracious. We judge prayerfully, so that we can judge carefully, so that the love of Christ can flow to others and they can experience His goodness.

So Jesus teaches to judge carefully, to judge prayerfully, and then lastly I think He teaches us to judge lovingly. Look at verse 12, He says, "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets." This is the Golden Rule. It's what theologians call the pinnacle of the Sermon on the Mount. This is the summit. Think of the highest good that anyone could possibly do for you. What is it? It would be to meet your needs sacrificially, and unselfishly. That's what's most loving, and that's the essence of the law.

It's simple, it's straightforward, but it's profound, and it's challenging. It is a law of love. It is a law that looks at the law of God and says, 'How can I apply this to my life and others in a way that's most loving?' Now, there are other religions that have other laws that are similar to this. Confucius is quoted as having said, 'Do not to others what you would not wish done to yourself.' And there are a few religions that have the same sort of mantra, okay? So, it's similar, but that little 'not,' actually limits the scope of the commandment to only negatives. It's saying don't do what you don't want them to do to you, only negative. What Jesus says puts it in the positive. Jesus says, not only do I not want you to punch this person, I want you to love this person. I want you to befriend this person. I want you to go talk to that kid at school that nobody else wants to talk to. It's limitless in its scope, and it calls us to love without self-righteousness and self-centeredness. It calls us to take our concerns out of the picture, and to ask, 'How can I meet the needs, cares, loves, wants, joys, hopes, dreams, and passions of the other person in accordance with Scripture?' So, it looks at the law of God and it says, how can we apply the law of God in a way that is the most loving? This is the law and the prophets.

So, this law of love corrects our judgmentalism. I think the Pharisee in our hearts, what we tend to do, is we tend to take traditions that have been created by men and we elevate them into the status of commandments of God. Jesus actually rebukes the Pharisees for this. I think what Jesus is saying here is 'The whole law is summed up in love and as you apply all of my law, it needs to be done in love, and my law is most loving. So, whatever standard you're holding other people to, it needs to be in accordance to my law, not your law.' I think Jesus is also giving us the attitude of judgment. He's saying, it has to be an attitude of love. Paul describes love in this way in 1 Corinthians 13: "Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." That's the attitude of love. Any judgment that we make must come with that kind of attitude. If it doesn't, then guess what we end up doing? We end up becoming the dogs that defile God's word. We end up becoming the pigs.

I have to admit that I became a dog and a pig yesterday at a softball tournament. We're playing a game, and there's a time limit on little league softball games, I get it, you can't be out there all day. It's a tournament, you have to have games moving. There's a time limit, but I don't know if you guys know this about baseball, there's not supposed to be a clock. It's one of the beauties of it. You just play the game and you kind of forget about time. Well, there's a clock, and it was pretty obvious to me that the coach on the other team was stalling because they had the lead, so that we couldn't come back. So, of course, what did the little Pharisee in my heart do? He judged him, and then I began to throw a temper tantrum. You know, not a big one, but 'Come on, get in the box. Play! Let's go!' Then I got so frustrated I just got up and walked off. I'm the bookkeeper and I literally got up and said, 'I can't do this,' and got up and walked off. Now, let me tell you, what is more sinful in that moment: a coach stalling, or a minister of the gospel being judgmental, critical, and harsh? I am the one with the log. He had a speck, and I had a log.

Well, it didn't stop there. Last night we find out that we get seeded in the brackets, and I'm looking at the seeding, and I'm like, 'They got the seeding wrong!' So what did I do? I get in

the GroupMe with all our team parents and I put the tournament director on blast. I started gossiping. I started slandering. 'How could they do this? We're not the six seed! We should be the five seed!' Right? What is worse? A Christian gossiping and slandering about somebody they don't know, imputing motives on somebody that they haven't talked to, or misseeding a ten and under softball team in a tournament. That is worse! Yes! Correct! So, what do I have to do? I have to come to Jesus and I have to ask Him to graciously, lovingly take the log out of my own eye.

Is that the way I would want to be treated? No! I wouldn't want to be gossiped about and slandered about, and I wouldn't want to have fans criticizing me openly in the stands like that. What Jesus is calling us to do, is to sensitively put ourselves in the place of another and ask ourselves, how would I want to be treated in this moment? If we do that, it means we will always be generous, and never harsh, we will always be understanding and never cruel, and we will always be kind. This law of love will guide us to judge lovingly so that the flow of the gospel can come out of our hearts to others, and so that we experience God's love. I wasn't in a good mood judging them! They wouldn't have been in a good mood knowing I was judging them either.

The law of love guides us as we judge lovingly, and it points us to Jesus when we fail so that we can experience the good life again. Jesus embodied the law of love. He was the only person who could ever judge the world, but He said, 'I came not to judge the world, but to save it.' He humbled himself to obedience to the point of death on the cross, why? To save judgmental, critical, harsh, Pharisaical people like us, to make us sons and daughters, to bring forgiveness where we have brought judgment, so that we can experience the river of God's love in our hearts, and so that the river of God's love would flow out to others. So, that's what we do. We come to Him with our judgmentalism and we ask Him to save us, and we ask Him to change us. We ask Him to remove our judgmental spirit. We receive His mercy, and His peace, and His joy, and He transforms us.

Jesus is the only one who sees perfectly clearly. He's the only one who can restore our sight. He's the only one who perfectly knows your heart, and your mind, and your actions, and everything that you do. He wants to come and rescue you, and save you from your judgmentalism, but you have to receive it. You have to be willing to do what He does and call a spade a spade, and you know what? I'm acting like a dog, I'm acting like a pig right now. The amazing grace of the gospel is that Jesus died for dogs and pigs, to transform us into His children, to remove the beam from our eyes so that the healing channels of the gospel can flow through us and to us, so that everybody can experience God's grace and peace. We can't do that on our own, right? 'Physician, heal thyself;' we can't heal ourselves, so we go to God and we ask Him to heal us. So now, we're going to pray, and we're going to talk to the Lord about our sin, and we're going to experience His healing grace. Let's pray together.