

The Sermon On The Mount

The Beautiful Tune We Love So Well And Play So Poorly

*“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”
(Matthew 5:3 ESV)*

*“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock.”
(Matthew 7:24–25 ESV)*

Do Not Judge

July 24th, 2022

Matthew 7:1-6

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Good morning, everyone! Please open your Bibles to Matthew 7 verse 1. Today we will be continuing in our series through the Sermon on the Mount.

Now as Pastor Paul has reminded us throughout this series, the subtitle for the series is “the beautiful tune we love so well and play so poorly.” The sermon on the mount functions like a tuning fork for us. We are to hear it and then tune our lives to match.

Here in Matthew 7, Jesus begins to address an aspect of the Christian life that is frequently out of tune.

And yet, ironically, this is also one of the most quoted verses you will ever hear.

And one of the most misquoted for that matter.

We hear all kinds of people, not just Christians quote this passage to one another all around us. A major part of our culture and society is founded upon the idea it is wrong to judge to other people. The world praises tolerance as the highest virtue above all other things.

Society will tell you that you cannot judge other people because their life is their own. You don't know them, and you don't know their story. The world will tell you that it is wrong to think critically or negatively about others in any way shape or form. To disagree with someone's decisions or lifestyle is to hate them.

However, as we will see this morning, this is not at all what this passage is saying. We must remember what the Sermon on the Mount is. It is not telling people how to get saved, it is telling saved people how to live.

And here, in Matthew 7, Jesus is telling saved people how to walk the narrow road between being judgmental and being naïve. He is teaching us the proper way to view other people.

Jesus is laying out the proper tune for Christians to replicate.

Hopefully now you have your Bibles open to Matthew chapter 7.

Hear now the Word of the Lord, beginning at verse 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.” (Matthew 7:1-6 ESV)

This is the Word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

The Two Ditches

Here Jesus lays out the two major ditches that lay on either side of the road we ought to tread as saved people. The first of these two ditches is the most apparent in the text:

1. A Judgemental Spirit

This passage is teaching us that we ought not to have a judgemental spirit. Verse 1 seems to be pretty explicit. “Judge Not”. Clearly, however, Christians have continuously struggled to properly understand and apply this instruction.

We need to submit to Jesus’ instructions here but, in order to do so, we must be clear on what exactly he is teaching.

Is he saying that we should not think critically about how other people live? Is he saying that we should not pass condemnation on other people? Is he saying that we should not analyze and evaluate the way other people live?

Leon Morris is helpful here in pointing out what Jesus means when he says do not Judge. “The verb is used not only generally of passing a verdict, but specifically of passing an adverse verdict, condemning, and it is this that Jesus is forbidding. The present imperative gives the sense “Don’t make a practice of judging.”¹

Don’t make a practice of judging. That is the heart of Jesus’ instruction. Don’t be judgy. Use your critical thinking abilities with discernment.

I want you also to notice the reason Jesus gives for why we are not to judge others. That’s important for us to see.

He says “Judge not, *that you be not judged.*” He then goes on to drive the point home 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.”

Do you not know, Jesus asks, do you not know that you too will be judged? You yourselves stand under judgement, and more than that, the way that you have judged those around you will be held against you in God’s universal court!

You look around at the world around you and you judge those around you to make yourself feel better! You are like the pharisee standing in the temple thanking God that you are not like the tax collector beside you!

¹ Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 165.

Remember that this was a sermon written to Jesus' followers. He isn't correcting the wildly judgemental pharisees, he was correcting his disciples!

He is correcting us.

And if we are honest with ourselves, we know we need this correction. Unless you are way more sanctified than me, you still slide into this ditch from time to time. It is easy and natural for us after all. All people struggle not to be judgemental, ALL PEOPLE.

We all have a natural tendency to make less of our own sins and failures and make more of others. We have a natural bend to look out at the world with judgement and condemnation because it makes us feel better about ourselves.

It makes us feel better about the fact that we do not measure up.

That is what Jesus is saying in verse 3 and 4 when he talks about trying to take out the speck in your brother's eye while you have a log in your own eye. Leon Morris is once again helpful here as he notes that

“The meaning is not that in every case the person passing judgment is a worse sinner than the one he criticizes. It is rather that what he finds wrong in his brother is a very small matter compared with the sin God sees in him.”²

What you find wrong in your brother or sister is a very small matter compared with what God sees in you.

Or as R.T. France puts it:

“This passage, however, is concerned with the fault-finding, condemnatory attitude which is too often combined with a blindness to one's own failings³

² Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 166.

³ R. T. France, *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 1, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 146–147.

We have all fallen short of God's standard. So, it doesn't matter what standard you hold yourself to. It does not matter that you are good and righteous in your own eyes. You know and I know that we are all facing condemnation and judgement when compared to God's standard.

That is, unless we have put our faith in Jesus Christ, in his death on the cross and resurrection from the dead. If we have done that then by grace we are saved from judgement and condemnation, not by our works but by God's grace.

And if this is you, If you are a disciple of Jesus Christ this morning, then we above all others, forgiven as we have been from such an incredible weight of sin, ought not to have a judgemental spirit. We should not be making a practice of judging or condemning others as that is not compatible with a heart that is saved by God's grace alone. We should have a disposition of generous grace and mercy towards the sins of others.

Yet, we are in danger of coming out of one ditch and falling headfirst into the other.

Jesus does not pull us out of the ditch of judgementalism without also providing a warning to not fall into the ditch on the other side of the road.

That is the second ditch that Jesus instructs us to avoid:

2. A Lack Of Discernment

Jesus spends most of his time dealing with the other ditch, the ditch of judgementalism, because that is what his people struggled with most. He adds only a short quantifying statement reminding his people not to be completely indiscriminate so as to help them avoid over correcting.

This is the primary point of what is happening in verse 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."

Now on the surface this seems like a completely disconnected statement from what Jesus was just saying about judgement. Yet, these two analogies of throwing pearls before swine and giving to dogs what is holy are actually much more connected to what Jesus is saying about judgement than we might initially think.

What Jesus is doing here is warning against taking the correction of not judging too far.

He is warning against moving from a judgemental spirit to a complete lack of discernment whatsoever. He is saying that there is an appropriate time and an appropriate way to exercise judgement and discernment.

There are times when Jesus followers have to know when to not share the gospel with someone. Craig Bloomberg helpfully lays this out for us when he writes “Jesus is obviously not telling his followers not to preach to certain kinds of people, but he does recognize that after sustained rejection and reproach, it is appropriate to move on to others.”⁴

This is the consistent teaching of the New Testament. Jesus himself tells his disciples in Matthew 10:14

“And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town.” (Matthew 10:14 ESV)

There are times when it is necessary for Christians to withdraw from those they are trying to save from time to time. Especially in the face of repeated rejection and mockery. And to go even further, there are times when it is not wise to try and share the gospel in the first place; times when sharing the gospel would only result in rejection and mockery.

This is something I have had to learn at work, and something I am still learning. I have been blessed with the opportunity to share the gospel with virtually every person I have worked with and, in doing so, I have seen a variety of different responses. A lot of my coworkers like to make jokes about my Christian faith or Christianity as a whole. I have had to learn to discern when to use these jokes as an opportunity to evangelize and when to simply ignore them. Some of my co workers are genuinely curious about what I believe, and I can have productive conversations with them about spiritual matters. Others simply enjoy joking and teasing me and have no genuine interest in hearing what I have to say. And some use the jokes as an opportunity to attack and discredit Christ.

I have to use discernment to know when to try and share my faith bluntly, when to try different tactics and approaches, and when it is best to simply say nothing at all. There are times when trying to begin a gospel conversation with these men will only result in mockery and rejection of Christ.

That’s what Jesus means when he tells us not to throw out pearls before swine.

⁴ Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, vol. 22, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 129.

Christians must exercise discernment in sharing the gospel, and they must exercise discernment in who they allow into the flock.

A huge part of the problem with many churches in the western world today is their lack of discernment in both of these areas. There are churches and pastors who are unwilling to address blatant and unrepentant sin in their congregations. There are churches not demonstrating any discernment whatsoever and welcoming absolutely anyone into their congregations in the celebration of tolerance and a lack of judging.

This was a major problem for the Church in Corinth. 1 Corinthians 5 details Paul's rebuke of the Corinthian church for allowing a man to continue sleeping with his father's wife while still being an active member of the community. Indeed, the Corinthians praised themselves for their tolerance in allowing this incestuous relationship to continue.

So, Paul writes to them:

“For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? 13 God judges those outside. “Purge the evil person from among you.” (1 Corinthians 5:12-13 ESV)

So clearly there is an appropriate way for Christians to judge. Craig Keener highlights this in his commentary writing:

“Jesus does not oppose offering correction, but only offering correction in the wrong spirit.”⁵

We are to exercise discernment brothers and sisters. We are to correct one another in love. As the Apostle Paul writes in Galatians 6:1:

“Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.” (Galatians 6:1)

“Restoring one another in a spirit of gentleness”

⁵ Craig S. Keener, *Matthew*, vol. 1, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), Mt 7:1–2.

That is the road that Jesus is laying out for us here. The road between these two ditches that we often find ourselves falling into.

We are like a pendulum constantly swinging back and forth, from one extreme to another. Which is precisely why this correction from Jesus is so desperately needed. I know that I personally have spent time in both of these ditches throughout my life.

There are times when I have someone managed to be in both ditches at the same time! Showing a lack of discernment in one area of my life and hard hearted judgementalism in another.

It truly is immensely difficult for us to find the balance and stay on the road that Jesus has set forth before us. So, with the time that we have left this morning I want to provide three things that we need to stay on this road.

How Do I Stay On This Narrow Road?

The first thing that we need to do in order to stay on the Road is:

1. Lead Yourself

This is a primary application of this passage. Christians should hear Jesus' words here and understand that before they can be helpful to others they must first lead themselves.

Or, as Matthew Henry helpfully puts it. "Here is a good rule for reprovers; first reform thyself."⁶

"First reform thyself."

That is the natural emphasis that comes when we understand the depth of our sinful state before the three times holy God of the universe. We should be filled with the desire to put to death our own sin before considering the sins of others.

That is what Jesus is driving at with his analogy of trying to take a speck out of your brother's eye while you have a log in your own eye.

In addition to interning here at the Church I also work as a carpenter. A couple of years ago I was at work, cutting some beams for a deck and my saw hit a knot in the wood. The knot exploded and a small sliver of wood flew past my glasses into my eye. Now I am smart enough not to rub my eye

⁶ Matthew Henry and Thomas Scott, *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997), Mt 7:1.

when a sliver goes into it but I still tried everything else to get it out. I blinked my eyes like crazy, I tried holding my eyes open and washing it out with water. But nothing worked. The pain kept getting worse and worse throughout the day so I eventually went to an optometrist. He inspected my eye and told me that I had managed to get it out but not before it scratched my cornea really badly. Luckily your Cornea heals itself quickly and I was back at work in a couple days.

But exactly one week later, I was cutting a piece of decking and another sliver flew into the same eye!

So maybe the moral of the story is I need to wear safety goggles, I guess.

But this time I learned my lesson. I went to the optometrist right away! He put on his little magnifying headset looked closely at my eye, flipped my eyelid, and delicately removed the sliver before it could do any significant damage.

Now its safe to say that if I showed up at the optometrist's office and I saw that he had a giant log sticking out of his own eye then there would be absolutely no way I would let him try and get the sliver out of mine.

Not only would he not be able to, but he would also likely beat me near to death with the log in the process!

He would certainly be doing more harm than good!

And that's the point.

If you are the kind of person who is consistently looking at everyone else's flaws, then you will naturally be more harm than good to those around you.

Christians must focus primarily on their walk with the Lord. We must lead ourselves.

Now this does not mean that Christian's aren't at all concerned with their brothers and sister's walk with Christ. As we saw in Galatians 6, Christians are to restore one another with kindness. As we see in Matthew 18 Christians are to be concerned when a brother or sister is living in sin.

It is not a matter of indifference. It is a matter of FOCUS and PRIORITY.

The speck in the eye is a problem. It needs to be dealt with before it causes more harm. However, the log in your own eye is a much bigger problem. It must be dealt with right away.

I think there's something to be said for the fact that noticing the sin in others should also make us reflect on our own sinfulness. I don't know where the saying originated but I think there is a lot of truth to the notion that the things that bother you most in other people are often things that you need to deal with yourself.

I have a twin brother and he has been one of the greatest sources of sanctification in my life! Growing up we had a bit of a rocky relationship to say the least. We would constantly get on each other's nerves. I remember getting so frustrated at the fact that he was so impatient.

I would get so annoyed, and I would think to myself "Can't you just be more patient!"

It took me a long time to realize that my impatience at his lack of patience said more about my sinfulness than it did his. I realized I had a lot of work to do on myself.

This is a lesson I am still learning today. One of the ways to make sure that we are emphasizing our own holiness and sanctification over looking at other people's sins is to take that ever-important moment of reflection when we notice something in someone else.

Rather than react in judgmental thoughts or actions, we ought to first consider our own sinfulness and need for grace to grow. This will better prepare us to help restore that brother or sister in a spirit of love and kindness.

There is nothing more important in helping someone with their battle against sin than awareness of our own need and dependence on grace. It is easy to be distracted and take our eyes off of Jesus to look down at those around us.

We must stay focused on Christ and know that first we must lead ourselves.

That's the first way for us to stay on this narrow road. The second instruction for us is to:

2. Be Alert

This is the natural instruction to keep us out of the ditch of a lack of discernment. This is arguably the greater concern for many Christians today. We must be aware of the dangers of welcoming anyone and everyone into our congregations without discretion.

We must be alert. We must stay aware.

That was actually what the early Church understood verse 6 to be saying. The *Didache*, one of the earliest written texts in Christian history recounts how the early Church interpreted verse 6 saying ““Let no one eat or drink of your Eucharist, but they who have been baptized into the name of the Lord; for concerning this also the Lord has said, ‘Give not that which is holy to the dogs.’”⁷

We must be careful who we allow to take communion. Or, in other words, we must be careful who we allow into the Church.

We see this kind of instruction all throughout the New Testament. We are warned to watch out for wolves in sheep’s clothing.

We must stay alert.

If we are not careful, we are bound to be lulled into the same mindset as the world around us. That is pretty easy for us to do, if we are honest with ourselves.

It is easier after all. It is easy to look over people living in sin and disobedience to God. It is easier to “live and let live”. That is what our flesh desires after all. It gives us permission to live however we want.

AND THAT IS THE PROBLEM!

If we had it our way, we would be living just like the world. In open rebellion against God. We would be indulging all the desires of the flesh and praising ourselves for our tolerance and grace as we rocket down the path towards hell!

That is why Church membership matters. That is why we must exercise discernment so that we will not be lead astray. We must be careful who we admit as brothers and sisters in Christ.

We must be discerning and guard the flock, and we must be discerning in our evangelistic efforts.

That’s the second aspect of staying awake.

There is a reason Jesus uses the analogy of throwing treasures before dogs and pigs. Both animals were considered unclean to Jesus’ audience. Dogs were considered giant rats in those days. They were not household pets. They were dirty, savage, garbage eating, rats. As I mentioned earlier, this means that we must consider our audience when sharing the gospel. The Bible clearly teaches us

⁷ As cited in Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount, The Bible Speaks Today*. Accordance electronic ed. (Downers Grove.: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 181.

that there are times when we must cease sharing the gospel to certain people in the face of repeated rejection and mockery. They are clearly not ready for it. The soil is not prepared. It is time to Move on.

All this is to say that Jesus is not instructing us to never use judgement or discernment. To do that would be to over correct to his instructions on not judging.

Rather, we must exercise judgement and discernment without developing a hard and judgmental spirit towards others.

We cannot let ourselves be numbed and distracted into thinking the same way as the world around us. We must be alert.

And third and final thing we must do to stay on this narrow road is:

3. Look to Jesus

Usually, we are falling into either of these two ditches because of arrogance or because of ignorance. Jesus is the cure to both.

Often when we hear this verse quoted, it is done so with the implication that we are not supposed to exercise any discernment whatsoever. But, when we look to Christ, we see that this is not the case.

Jesus exercised tremendous grace and mercy, and he was also wise and discerning. John 2:23-24 demonstrates this well:

“Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. ²⁴ But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people.” (John 2:23-24 ESV)

Jesus knew what was in their hearts. He knew that it was not worthwhile to entrust himself and his message to these people.

Jesus is our example and our guide. He walked this narrow road. He is the one who broke bread with tax collectors and sinners. He is the one who spoke tenderly with the Samaritan outcast woman at the well. He is the one who said:

“Let he who is without sin cast the first stone” and yet he told the woman, “Go and sin no more.”

(Paraphrase of John 8)

He demonstrates the perfect balance of grace, mercy, and discernment. He is the one we must follow.

Looking to Jesus gives us the model for how we are to live out this delicate balance, and looking to Jesus also humbles us.

Looking to Christ reminds us that we have been forgiven a debt so insurmountable, so massive, that we ought to be the most merciful people in the world; that we ought not to judge others because we are aware of the depth of our sin and our absolute dependence on God’s grace.

Are you tempted to look out at the world with a heart of judgement and condemnation?

Look to Christ.

Are you tempted to make little of your own sin and much of others?

Look to Christ.

Gaze into blazing white radiance of Jesus’ Glory and majesty and every shadow of sin in you will be laid bare. Dig deep into the word of God, seek to gain a deeper understanding, a deeper experience of Jesus and as you see the righteousness and splendour of the Lord of the Universe then you will know the depth of your sin and need for grace.

When we fix our eyes upon Jesus, we will find that this leads to humility and graciousness. When we know that our righteousness is but filthy rags in comparison to Christ’s holiness it will decimate our tendency to judge others.

We must look to Jesus as Hebrews 12 so helpfully reminds us:

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”

(Hebrews 12:1-2 ESV)

Jesus is the founder of our faith, and he is the perfecter of our faith. He is the one who placed us on this narrow road, and he is the one who will keep us on it. He is the one who will help us avoid these two perilous ditches as we seek to be salt and light to those around us.

Getting this right is crucial to maintaining our witness to the world around us. We cannot lapse into judgementalism and hardheartedness and neither can we lose our saltiness by being no different than the world. We need to find the balance and it is only by the grace of God that we have any hope in walking this narrow road.

Oh God help!

Let's pray together.