

Judge Not That You Be Not Judged
Matthew 7:1-6

INTRO.:

1. This AM we come to what is perhaps the most controversial part of the Sermon on the Mount.
 - a. It bothers me to hear the way some people, even Christian have used Matthew 7:1-5.
 - 1) Many people see this as a nice verse to have on hand to prove what you already want to believe.
 - 2) It has been used to convey the idea, "You live your life and I'll live mine. Don't you tell me how to live, and certainly don't you try to impose your standards of morality on me."
 - b. "*Judge not that you be not judged*" has been spouted by a lot of people who have no earthly idea what Jesus really meant.
 - 1) And I think I can safely say that the people who quote this verse the most are the ones who understand it the least.
 - 2) In fact, the way it is often used just happens to fall the PC spirit of our time.
 - c. **ILLUST.:**
 - 1) A teenage daughter who is at odds with her parents because they have laid down the rules that she cannot go out with a certain boy because they do not think it would be good for her spiritual development.
 - a) In a huff she storms out of the room and screams, "*Judge not that you be not judged!*"
 - b) As she slams the door, she feels she has cleared her responsibility to obey her parents by telling them off biblically.
 - 2) Or some student on a Christian college campus gets drunk and has to be disciplined.
 - a) Immediately, his friends rally around and suddenly they become very biblical.
 - b) They defend his actions by saying, "Judge not that you be not judged."
 - 3) Or some of you may remember a number of years back when a congregation in Oklahoma made national news for disfellowshipping a woman for her immoral behavior.
 - a) As the new media and late night talk show hosts picked up on this story they suddenly got very religious.
 - b) Men like Phil Donahue were saying the congregation's actions were wrong because Jesus said, "*Judge not that you be not judged.*"
 - 4) I could go on with several other illustrations, but I think you can get the point I am trying to make.
2. Seeing how this passage has been so abused by so many, we are led to ask, "What was Jesus really saying in Matthew 7:1-6?"
 - a. I think the key to unlocking the meaning of this verse is found in going back to Matt. 5:20 where Jesus said: "*For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.*"
 - b. The point that Jesus was making throughout this sermon is that as His disciples we must have a different kind of righteousness than that of the scribes and Pharisees.
 - 1) Their righteousness was superficial; they wore it on their sleeves.
 - 2) The true disciple's righteousness must be much deeper, coming from the heart, and not just outward actions.
 - 3) This type of righteousness grows out of a heart that is committed to the Father.
 - c. Notice how Jesus expands on this theme as the sermon continues.
 - 1) In Matt. 6 Jesus dealt with how our righteousness deals with our relationship with God.
 - 2) Now as we start Matt. 7 we will find Him dealing with how it affects our relationship with our fellow man.
3. As Matt. 7 starts Jesus is dealing with two different extremes in the problem of human judgment.
 - a. The first extreme is a harsh, critical spirit.
 - b. The second extreme is permissiveness.
4. This morning, we want to take a look at both of these extremes.

LESSON:

- I. 1st: Jesus deals with the harsh, critical spirit: vs. 1-2: (Read).
- A. As Jesus looked at the religious situation of his day, He saw that judging others had become a great religious problem.
1. The Pharisees and scribes sat in the place of the critic.
 2. They were quick to pass judgment on those who did not live up to their expectations.
 3. ILLUST.:
 - a. When Jesus was in the house of Simon the Pharisee and the sinful woman anointed his feet, Simon said, *“If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a sinner.”* (Luke 7:39).
 - b. The Pharisees, in their self-righteous arrogance, had created a special class of people called *“sinners,”* as if they themselves were not also sinners.
 4. The fact is that the Pharisees were used to judging others self-righteously.
 - a. And in our text Jesus said there are problems with that kind of judging.
 - b. It is overly critical, always going around with a nit-picking attitude, digging and searching for faults, and always suspecting the worst.
- B. So when Jesus says that we are not to judge, He is not talking about:
1. The judgment in a courtroom.
 2. Judging open and obvious sin (we will get to that later).
 3. Judging false teachers.
- C. What He is talking about is a hasty, unloving, "holier than thou" type of attitude.
1. We sometimes call this “jumping to conclusions.”
 2. It is at the very heart of gossiping and rumor-bearing.
 3. Jesus was not saying that we should never assess people with some discrimination, but rather that we should not have a harsh, judgmental spirit.
- D. What drives this overtly critical attitude is the belief that we can see as clearly as God sees.
1. It is the belief that:
 - a. I can see your motives.
 - b. I can see the way you are thinking.
 - c. I know all the things that have led you to this point in your life.
 2. That is the type of thinking that Jesus wants to eliminate.
 - a. Whenever we make a judgment based on what we have seen, sometimes that is not enough to provide the whole picture.
 - b. Human judgment is limited to the information which we put into it and sometimes that is not enough to make an accurate judgment.
 3. The Indians had their way of saying this when they said: “Don’t judge a man until you’ve walked a mile in his moccasins.”
 - a. And there is something to that wisdom.
 - b. For example, a person brought up in a Christian home cannot really know the temptations of a teen-ager brought up in a thoroughly sinful environment.
 - c. The fact is that if we realized what some people have to go through, instead of condemning them, we might marvel that they have succeeded at being as good as they are.
 4. ILLUST.:
 - a. There is a story about a newspaper reporter that is a good example of what we are talking about.
 - b. The reporter was searching for a story about the laziness that existed throughout the South, when he saw a man in his field, sitting in a chair and hoeing his weeds.
 - c. This had to be the ultimate in laziness.
 - d. So he rushed back to his car to start his story when he looked back a second time and what he saw changed his entire outlook.
 - e. He saw that the pants legs on the farmer hung down loose -- the man had no legs.
 - f. So what seemed at first to be a story of laziness turned into a story of great courage.

5. God once made the point that *“Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”* (1 Samuel 16:7).
 - a. That is why I do not have the right to sit in judgment on someone else’s motives, because I do not know what they are.
 - b. Only the Lord knows all.
6. We cannot know everything in everybody else’s heart.
 - a. I cannot read all your motives.
 - b. I cannot see you as God does.
 - c. I need to give you the benefit of the doubt.
 - d. That is what Paul meant when he said in 1 Cor. 13 that *“love believes all things.”*
 - 1) Love believes the best.
 - 2) If we truly love someone we should not be going around trying to find faults in their life.

- E. Also notice that Jesus said that this self-righteous judgmental attitude has a way of boomeranging on us: *“For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.”* (vs. 2).
1. If you start throwing out this critical spirit on other people, it will come back.
 2. We will receive the same kind of treatment that we dish out.
 3. If we judge others harshly and jump to the worst conclusions about others, we can be certain that we will be treated in the same way, by both others and God.

II. 2nd: Jesus deals with the hypocritical attitude: vs. 3-5: (Read).

- A. Not only was the Pharisaic righteousness overtly critical, but it was also hypocritical – or two-faced.
1. We like to look at people with bifocals.
 - a. We use the bottom part to see ourselves.
 - 1) It has kind of a rosy tint to it.
 - 2) And we tend to look past any shortcomings.
 - b. But the top part we use to look at others.
 - c. And that is the hypocrisy Jesus was denouncing.
 2. It is like the parable in Luke 18 where a Pharisee goes to the temple to pray.
 - a. The Pharisee looks through the top part of his bifocals and says, “Oh my! I’m glad I’m not like that scumbag out there.”
 - b. And then he looks through the bottom part and says to God, “You are just so blessed to have me on your side.”
 - c. That is the kind of judging Jesus condemned.
- B. The graphic example Jesus used here of a plank of wood and a speck of dust is ridiculous.
1. While we have heard it so many times that it has lost its humorous twist, for the people in Jesus’ audience who heard it for the first time, they were probably laughing out loud.
 2. It sounds like a scene out of the Three Stooges.
 - a. Here is one guy with a little piece of sawdust in his eye.
 - b. There is somebody else with a 2X4 coming out of his forehead, and he is trying to get that speck out.
 - c. Every time he turns around, the other guy has to duck or get wacked in the head with the 2x4.
 3. While Jesus used the illustration of a plank and a speck because he was a carpenter and that was familiar to him and the people around him; if He were living today, he might have used a man watching a football game.
 - a. Have you ever listened to a man, or woman, watch a football game, especially if his team is losing?
 - b. He will criticize the quarterback for not throwing well, the receivers for not catching the easy passes, and the linemen for not blocking well.
 - c. Have you ever thought - If he is so good at knowing what to do, then why is he sitting in the chair watching the game instead of being out there playing?
 - 1) I will tell you why.
 - 2) If you had seen him out in the back yard trying to play ball?
 4. Jesus says, "You have no room to criticize others because of your own lack of ability!"

- C. But even though we are unqualified, we still want to judge others.
1. And we often do it for selfish reasons because it makes us feel better.
 2. If we have a problem with sin in our own lives, it takes a little pressure off to point the finger at others for a while.
 - a. By looking at another person's big sin, our sin does not look so bad after all.
 - b. But, Jesus warns us that we have got to clean up our own act before we tamper with the lives of others.
 3. When I spend my time pointing my finger at your sin, my attention is distracted from my own sins, and that is the real danger of judging.
 - a. We are all sinners, and we are to work together as a family to overcome our sins.
 - b. But ultimately, the only sins over which I have control are my own, and those are the ones that should command my greatest attention.
 4. An illustration of this is found back in Gen. 38.
 - a. Judah's daughter-in-law Tamar had lost her husband.
 - b. Judah gave her another of his sons, but he would not cooperate in giving her a child.
 - c. Then he died and Judah would not give her his youngest son as the law demanded.
 - d. So Tamar did the only thing she could think of.
 - e. When Judah announced he was going to the market, Tamar dressed as a prostitute, she disguised herself, and seduced him, becoming pregnant in the process.
 - f. Later, when Judah learned that Tamar was pregnant out of wedlock, he said, "Oh! This is terrible! Tamar must be killed!"
 - g. So she walked out and said, in essence, "That's fine, but I want you to know that you're the father."
 5. We can see so well the things in others' lives that we want to pick on, but Jesus said we are usually being overly critical and hypocritical when we do it.
- D. But it is also important for us to notice that Jesus did not stop there.
1. He did not instruct us to stay out of other people's business - period.
 2. Rather, He gave us the responsibility of helping our brother: *"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."* (vs. 5)
 - a. What is the loving, Christian thing to do when someone comes to you and he has a speck in his eye?
 - 1) Turn and walk away?
 - 2) Do you say, "Oh, no. I could never take that speck out of your eye. I have had specks in my eye before?"
 - 3) Of course not!
 - 4) He has something in his eye and he needs it taken out.
 - b. Mom's when your child comes to running to you with a splinter in his finger and he is crying, "Please take this splinter out!"
 - 1) What is the Christian thing to do?
 - 2) Leave the splinter there?
 - 3) No! You take the splinter out.
 3. So Jesus was saying there is a place for some discernment in people's lives.
 - a. If you see a brother or sister who has a speck in their eye, you need to help them take it out!
 - b. But first you need to take the 2x4 of self-righteousness out of your own eye.
 - c. Paul put it this way: Gal 6:1: *"Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted."*
 - 1) You who are spiritual -- not self-righteous, but spiritual -- those of you who have the evidence of the fruit of the Spirit in your life, you go restore him.
 - 2) Matthew 7 should not interfere with our responsibility to go to somebody who is sinning in a loving and carrying way.

- III. 3rd: In vs. 6 Jesus talks about the right way to judge.
- A. Before we look at what He said, let me make an important point here.
1. Since the harsh, critical spirit is obviously wrong, some have tried to get so far away from it that they have gone to the opposite extreme, which is permissiveness.
 - a. The holders of this position point to the first five verses of this chapter as their proof text that we are not to judge.
 - b. They stress long and loud that Jesus said that we cannot judge anyone else.
 - c. They interpret that as meaning we cannot judge in any case or in any setting, and especially do not try to tell me I am doing anything wrong.
 - d. Their very attitude shows an interesting thing.
 - 1) They believe you cannot judge anyone over anything, yet they are judging you.
 - 2) Thus they practice the very thing they claim is wrong for others.
- B. Coming back to vs. 6 Jesus ends His discussion by saying: *“Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.”*
1. If you think vs. 1-5 prohibit any kind of discerning in judgment, then you have a real problem here.
 - a. First Jesus says, *“Don’t judge, don’t condemn.”*
 - b. Then, in the same breath, He says, *“Make certain judgments concerning people and behavior.”*
 2. The fact is that you have got to use some kind of criteria to decide who those spiritual dogs and pigs are.
- C. How can these two positions be reconciled?
1. The two positions actually complement and limit each other perfectly.
 - a. In the first statement, as we have already seen, Jesus condemns the critical, holier-than-thou, jumping to conclusions sort of judgment that the Pharisees were known for.
 - b. In this second statement, Jesus acknowledges the need for making decisions concerning people and behavior that is detrimental to our Christian lives.
 2. Vs. 6 stands as a safeguard against an extreme interpretation of vs. 1-5.
 - a. It is not the case that Jesus condemns all judging.
 - b. In fact, in this verse He demands that we make some judgments.
 - 1) In John 7:24, Jesus said, *“Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.”*
 - 2) In 1 John 4:1, John tells us not to believe every preacher that comes along, but *“test the spirits, whether they are of God.”*
 - 3) In 1 Cor. 5:11, Paul tells us not to associate with a brother who is *“a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner.”*
 - c. All of these verses demand that we make a judgment of some sort.
- D. The command not to judge others does not mean that we can overlook the sinfulness of certain actions.
1. We are never to look down in self-righteous judgment on another sinner, for we have all fallen short of the glory of God.
 2. But we can recognize sin as sin, and we should never try to justify it.
 - a. Jesus said that you do not give to the dogs the sacred sacrifice reserved for the priest and you do not feed your pearls to the pigs.
 - b. These are harsh words, but His point is that we should not waste spiritual treasures on those who have no spiritual interest.
 3. In Matt. 10, as Jesus sent some disciples out, He said, *“Look. When you go into a town, and they do not have the time of day for you, shake the dust off your sandals and get out of there.”*
 - a. The fact is that some people are spiritual pigs and dogs.
 - b. The apostle Paul did just this thing when the Jews rejected his message and he went to the gentiles in Acts 18:6.

4. NOTE: This is the exception rather than the rule.
 - a. We are not to jump to the conclusion that no one is interested and stop evangelizing.
 - b. But there are some people who have no spiritual interest.
 - 1) They will trample the precious things we hold dear to our heart.
 - 2) And Jesus said to use some discernment, have the ability to make judgment in our minds.

CONC.:

1. So what is the message of Matt. 7:1-6?
 - a. I think it is a warning for us to avoid the extremes of judgment.
 - b. We need to be careful not to become harshly judgmental, looking for faults, taking the opportunity to look down on others from our position of self-righteousness.
 - c. But neither are we to overlook sin.
 - 1) We need to be able to recognize sin for what it is.
 - 2) Any attempt to overlook or justify sin on any grounds is itself sinful.
2. While we have seen what Jesus taught, let us close with an example from the everyday life of Jesus.
 - a. In John 8, Jesus is confronted by a mob pushing forward a woman that was caught in the act of adultery.
 - 1) The mob was using her, as if she were a thing, in order to trap Jesus.
 - 2) The Jewish law said she must die.
 - 3) Roman law said that she could not be killed without their permission.
 - 4) And there was never any doubt about her guilt, nor was there any doubt as to the seriousness of her sin.
 - b. So what did Jesus do when confronted by this sinner?
 - 1) First, he refused to look down on her through self-righteous glasses.
 - a) Nor would He allow the mob to treat her as a thing.
 - b) Rather He forced the mob to consider their own sin.
 - 2) But, second, He did not justify her behavior.
 - a) He would not refer to her action as anything other than sin.
 - b) But He would forgive her and challenged her to stop sinning.
3. Jesus will do the same thing for you this morning.
 - a. If you come to him, he will also forgive your sin with the challenge to live a life of purity for him